GRUMBLEBY HALL

OR WHOSE BOY?

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GRUMBLEBY HALL

OR WHOSE BOY?

BY

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GRUMBLEBY HALL;

OR, WHOSE BOY.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

THE two sisters were still at their country residence, having been detained longer than anticipated by some needed repairs and alterations to the house in Bedford Square. Though an occasional sense of loneliness was experienced from a seclusion but rarely relieved by any visitor, neither appeared to regret their detention. The weather had been favourable for out-door rambles and drives, and, save when oppressed by the heat, or any greater weakness in the invalid, they had availed themselves thereof to make frequent excursions to the surrounding objects of interest, which in this county are numerous. Old Sarum, the Roman Sorbiodunum, was a favourite resort, affording frequent topics for conversation and subjects for historical research, in which the sisters delighted to engage in the evenings, and contrived to make a plan of the interior, and of its relative position to the surrounding country. Its circular shape, and enclosing a high hill, suggested the probability of its having been a fastness of the early Britons, and subsequently, with its central entrenched castle, deep surrounding fosse, and outer and inner ramparts, a formidable Saxon work. Two towered gates, at opposite sides, supported by other towers at equal distances, as well as its interesting battlements, walls, and entrenched positions, must have rendered the whole, in those days, all but impregnable.

The prospect from the top of the hill, the site of the ancient

city, was as beautiful as extensive, and, as the Herberts looked out on the inspiring scene, the distant centuries rose to their fervid imaginations, and the place became vivified by phantasmagoric processions, extending from baleful Druidical times to when embattled hosts of successive conquerors poured through breach and gate, in turn to be succeeded by royal pageants and ecclesiastic pomp, until, reduced by pillage and fire, and eventually deserted for the new city bearing the same name, but now known as Salisbury, its site alone remained.

With inspirations such as these, drawn from a familiar acquaintance with every place of note, as they visited each by turns, the sisters whiled away their evenings, heightening the interest by newer discoveries or fancies in relation to the stronghold of Britons, Saxons, and even Romans and Normans, if not also of Danes, borne evidence to by coins and relics found among the *débris*. Here (for they delighted to elaborate) parliaments and councils held their deliberations and enacted laws. Here, within its peopled walls, the tramp of armed knights and plumed warriors, in defence of kings and mitred ecclesiastics, who there reposed in safety, was heard bidding defiance to besieging armies; or, issuing from its sheltering coverts with clanging arms, a serried host poured along the Ikening-Street, from out the eastern gate, to give successful battle to an invading foe; until, in the mutations of time and events, a devastating arm rolled back the invincibles, and avenged the unrighteous massacre of his countrymen, by penetrating to the walled city, sitting so defiantly on its elevated site; and then, compelled by famine, or the intrepidity of the besieging hordes, led on by the Danish Sweyn, she was laid low by fire and rapine; but only to rise again, and once more assume her regal state, but this time the sovereign is of Norman blood, and parliaments assemble as of yore, until a feud between king and bishop originates, and perpetuates a decline that terminated in the rise of a rival Sarum at a short distance, and a gradual and final abandonment of the old, its very stones carried away to aid in the construction of the new, and a solitary farm-house left as the sole representative of its former greatness. But, with characteristic English conservatism, that tenement, in connection with certain lands around, claimed to be the embodiment of Old Sarum, and therefore, tenaciously holding on to its privilege, to exercise the rights that formerly appertained to the whole body of that ancient borough, one of which was the return of

two members to the Commons, whereby, if not as formidable as in its palmiest days, Old Sarum still retained as large a share in its country's counsels as had all its liege inhabitants of past centuries, the tenant of that farm standing out as the most remarkable yeoman and best represented personage in the three kingdoms. In latter days, however, again the spoiler came, and disputed such right, under the plea that he who exercised the suffrage was not a free and independent elector, and, regardless of the protest against a people's right to be represented in preference to an individual's, Old Sarum was disfranchised, in common with many other such boroughs, whose vested rights, so termed by indignant landowners, were designated 'rotten' by a class called reformers.

It had been a charming morning: the cheering, invigorating sunshine had made all radiant with beauty; the air was balmy with the sweet-scented myriad atoms that floated imperceptibly along, except to the sense of smell. The ripened fruits and golden harvest, ready for the gatherer and the sickle, proclaimed that mellow autumn was prepared to yield her redundant stores, the reward of hopeful culture and careful toil. Everything appeared to join in one general chorus of praise,—not only the little feathered warblers that loved to congregate around the safer precincts of the cottage, but even the frogs and reptiles about the pond, under shade of overhanging tuft, and the tiny insects in the garden, coursing among the flowers, were adding their croak, hum, or chirrup to the general chorus. And yet Bertha and Harriet had surrendered themselves to an abstraction of thought and manner completely in contrast to all without, and which even the lively chatter of Mary, who, affected by the delightful weather, had returned from the garden with her morning bouquet to replace the scarcely fading one of yesterday, was unable to dispel.

Partly with the hope of relieving this heaviness, and it might be a felt consonance with the shadowy suggestions of past brighter days, they ordered the conveyance, placed at their disposal by the owners of the cottage, for a drive to the site of Old Sarum. Although still observing the same serious deportment, their attention soon became so absorbed in the interest of the place, that a train of other thoughts displaced those of the earlier part of the day. Amongst other attempts at identification of particular localities, they were earnestly engaged in tracing the outlines of the old cathedral dedicated to the Virgin, with its episcopal

palace and clerical houses, situated in the north-west division of the former town, and, on their return, had become so engaged in the subject, that, after the evening meal, they were once more conjuring up the exciting scenes of those early days, aided by the county memorials and maps, amongst the latter of which were topographical identifications of the positions of the places and buildings that had formed the subject of their morning's conjectures, and which in the main they verified.

'How remarkable,' exclaimed Bertha, 'are the old halls and castles of England, even in their ruins! What an overpowering emotion—a something almost approaching the supernatural—seems to pervade the senses, as one endeavours to vivify the beings whose marvellous deeds are recorded, in such glowing, though extravagant and quaint language, in these ancient chronicles!'

'Distance, you know, sister,' said Harriet.

'Lends enchantment,' concluded Bertha. 'No doubt some modification in our views would occur were we nearer the occurrence of the events recorded, and possibly, with our modernized ideas of the heroic, we would be disposed to depreciate the gallantry or heroism of those valiant knights whose exploits now exact our homage; but this would be to judge of such faultily. To form our conceptions aright, we must transport ourselves to those times, and become familiar with a mode of life appealing to our sterner nature, which, while continually affording noble examples of chivalric honour and devotion,—approaching too often, I allow, to cruelty,—were yet too rude to tolerate the restraints of a more refined and artificial state. To me the weird-like beings who then inhabited these now decayed castles, villages, and towns, though now voiceless, are speaking, and personated in strong and clear lineaments, in perfect harmony with the genius of their day. I delight to picture to myself the glowing past, until the forests and hills, valleys and rivers, are again peopled with the stalwart forms of the invading sea-kings, or brave and martial Saxons, each contending with the other for a home and country, theirs only by conquest, wrested from the more savage, but not less daring aboriginals. And then to fancy them looking down from those heights upon us poor, tame, commonplace mortals! Imagine, sister,' exclaimed the speaker, carried on by her enthusiasm,—'imagine the pageantry of some victorious thane, encased in chain armour, and armed with battle-axe and spear, mounted on his caparisoned steed of

Norman blood and weight, and attended by a horde of followers, every one of whom, clad in suits of proof cuir-bouilli, and armed as their leader, was a Titan, as though the gods, having forsaken the effeminate Greeks and Romans, had endued anew with supernatural strength and prowess a more hardy race.'

She paused, as she felt her words powerless to portray the vision she wished to describe.

'And yet,' interposed Harriet, 'taking the imperfect records extant as the true exponents of such a race, a sensitive mind can but recoil from the contemplation of their terrible deeds. That they were brutal, the Domesday Books, or the preamble to laws, as well as these laws themselves, attest. Tradition, bards, and a few ancient chronicles have handed down to us episodes of those early centuries, that undoubtedly demand our admiration and almost unqualified approval and belief, did not their mythical character, or the highly imaginative style of the composition transmitting the account, require us to hesitate, and qualify our appreciation of events surrounded with so much of dramatic interest as to be capable of thwarting the judgment.'

'And,' continued Bertha, without noticing her sister's qualifying remarks, 'to such men and times our country owes everything. Our traditional as well as written history shows a succession of men and events that have conduced to our present high and enviable position as a nation.'

'True; and yet often how base the instrument, how unsparing and ruthless the deadly axe that hewed out the highway theretol It may be that fate, or the (providentially overruled) ungovernable passions of fallen humanity rendered no other road possible in the progression, but that makes the reality none the less revolting. A glance along the reversed picture, even captivating as is the perspective, and seen only in its less hideous and more attractive features, still tells at what a cost a nation's eminence is attained.'

'Unless you take into the picture one conserving, one purifying element, ever at work to bridle and control,—I mean the ecclesiastical,—whose humanizing institutions and teaching so early pervaded our country, and continued at every subsequent period, whether accepted or repudiated, to extend their ameliorating influence, and to affect our civil polity.'

'Until at one period it rendered it more terrible than it found it.'

'That may be the decision of such as do not take the trouble

to go deeper into the cause or relation of events, and only see in the stern, uncompromising system that admits of no tolerance of evil, the evil that it would repress. Can you recall the times of those grand old cathedrals, such as the one on whose site we stood to-day, without an emotion of deep reverence as well as admiration, and, coupling therewith the kindred institutions, not be constrained to gratefully recognise the inexpressible value, both in its inherent and conservative character, of the ecclesiastic rule for all that was good, powerfully aiding and stimulating the onward march to the present enviable state of moral as well as intellectual culture?'

'I have sometimes thought so, when listening to such enthusiasts as yourself; but then I have never studied a subject so uncongenial, more prone to draw conclusions from partial reading, and from my very small experience whilst abroad. These have led me to the conclusion that religious ascendency is inimical to advancement, except in stereotyped dogmatical lines of thought, in which alone the trammelled intellect is allowed to go forward.'

'I fear, Hetty, you have allowed your judgment to be warped by prejudice or a too careless review. Intelligence and morality is the foundation of a nation's prosperity: wanting these elements, you have a solution to a people's weakness and retrogression. The heart, as much as the mind, needs a careful and rigid education; and who more capable of fulfilling the responsible duty of instructors, than the pious and learned men who are themselves the uncompromising defenders of heaven-inspired truths? The history of the monastic period, to which the enlightenment and civilisation of Europe is mainly attributable, evidences incontrovertibly this to have been their high and holy mission.'

'Rather,' interposed Miss Harriet, 'that history, collated with a later, teaches that only when the student is left free and unshackled, with liberty of thought and action,—never, of course, ignoring individual responsibility,—can a people attain to true and permanent greatness, and that to deprive mind of its independence is the destruction of all liberty.'

And would it be consistent with truth, the centre and founda- of all freedom, and with a knowledge, confirmed by the ible teaching of former ages, to what error leads, to tolerate latter under the plea of liberty,—liberty to progress in evil it assumes a tyrant's power? No; deaf to the arguments scientists or schools of free thought, falsely so called, the

religious teacher is called to warn, to guide, nay, to insist on the only road to true happiness. There can be no toleration to error, alike inimical to freedom and civilisation as it is fatal to piety, nor in such case any substitution of suasion for compulsion.'

'But your argument assumes that the teacher, himself a fallible mortal, alone knows or has the right to decide what is truth and what error, and that the individual and national conscience must be the ecclesiastical. Was it not this assumption that eventually caused the whole fabric to break down, and leave these ruins as a beacon that the attempt to coerce what God has made free must fail? Nay, more, because so demoralizing and even adverse to a community's weal, that the over-strain caused its own collapse, and the abolition of a system that was intolerable, and from which dates unprecedented national progression.'

The tendency of the fervid expressions of Bertha's peculiar views, partly the result of her conventual education, and partly of her morbid state of body and mind, was to bear her onwards, until, with unusual fervour, she exclaimed, 'Recall the monasteries with their collegiate foundations, the spontaneous expression of the piety and holy zeal of learned and saintly men, of gifted abbots and revered prelates. Were they not once the nurseries of science? There alone, cherished amid surrounding darkness, the feeble light glimmered along the gloomy cloister, awaiting the auspicious hour when, under the sanction of the reverend teachers, she ventured forth to elevate and civilise. Nor did such lofty enterprise disturb her lowly walk, for there, within those sacred walls, hospitality rose to welcome and regale the shiftless poor, or bid the wayworn pedestrian repose under the grateful shelter. There, too, the oppressed found their only refuge from tyranny and cruelty, whilst the sin-sick pilgrim sought the consolations never denied the penitent. There charity, thrice blessed, broke the daily dole, and the child of want invoked the blessing of heaven on those by whose almony he was fed. What saintly feet once trod those broken, grass-covered flags! and hark! borne on the moaning breeze that eddies through the "fragmentary aisle," do you not hear the plaintive sound of the chanted *miserere*, the penitent utterance of a chastened soul wending his lowly way to the returning vesper, as now from the towered belfry goes forth o'er woodland, glade, and vale the evening chime, undulating its changing notes, until, in softened, melancholy tone, it reaches yonder village, and warns to pray? and then the muffled bell slowly—and—more

slowly—tolls—and dies away. Now along the fretted archway reverberates the holy anthem, swelling from whispered cadence into holy clamour for Heaven's pity, until, awed and subdued by the stillness and solitude around, it ceased, and prostrate forms before the mystic elements are reverently bowed in holy converse with the dread Triune. How changed! Alas! the spoiler's ruthless hand and Vandal heart has unpityingly, sacrilegiously toppled down, and left but the ivy-covered turret, the mouldering timbers, the fractured arches, the tottering columns, and the treacherous stairs, to mark the spots, over this once-favoured land, where stood those wondrous structures, and to proclaim how long ago all this was. With a sigh we turn away, and the past again becomes the past.'

During Bertha's rhapsodical utterances, her voice had risen with a strength, and been modulated by a cadence, that had charmed Harriet into silence. At times her sister's eyes appeared to shade down to a calm repose, at others they flashed with the fire of other days; and her whole bearing was such that an involuntary hope arose in the younger's breast that the old spirit was returning, and that the protracted sojourn in the country was producing its longed-for effect upon the health and spirits of her ardent sister.

A long pause ensued, during which each was busied in following out the train of thought their conversation had given rise to. The hallowed effect upon Bertha was visible in the almost supernatural glow of her features. At length, rising from her chair, Hetty took up her guitar, that lay on the side-table, and seated herself at her sister's feet, and ran her fingers over the strings, then, accompanying herself, sang in mellow, plaintive tones an old English ballad referring to other days. As the last note died off, she raised her eyes to the still open door, and became aware that her sister had not been her only auditor. Starting from their seats,—for Bertha's attention had also been attracted to the same object,—both hurried to the door, and, uttering a mutual exclamation of surprise, accompanied by a subdued shriek from Bertha, the latter sank, overpowered by her emotions, into the arms of Aubrey Grey.

Assisted by Harriet, he laid her gently on the couch, where, after the application of a little water and ammonia, she was soon restored. 'Bertha,' said Mr. Grey, stepping forward from the other end of the room, to which he had retired, lest, as she revived, her eyes opening on him might renew the effect his abrupt

appearance had occasioned, 'my intrusion has been too sudden. Attracted by the music to the open door, I was discovered before I had time to withdraw with the intention of causing myself to be announced, and must therefore crave both your pardons.' This was uttered in words so formally apologetic, that, as he ceased, Bertha hesitated to respond, awaiting some more ardent expressions, at least towards herself, but as he only added, 'I hope I have not distressed you by my thoughtlessness,' she merely replied, in a tone that required some control to assume,—

'O no, it was only momentary; *we* are all right now.'

'I should have written you that I was coming, but that I knew I should arrive as soon as the letter,' said he, addressing both. 'I have unexpectedly been called to the Foreign Office on important business, and have to return to the Continent immediately, but have taken this road on my way to Southampton, at which place I embark early to-morrow, so that I have but an hour to spare, the conveyance awaiting me that time at the gate.'

On hearing this announcement, Harriet stooped down and kissed her sister, inquiring if she was quite recovered; then, under pretence of giving some directions to the people of the house, withdrew, and left them to themselves.

Mr. Grey drew a chair, and seated himself by the head of the sofa on which Miss Herbert sat, with her head leaning on the arm thereof, but raised it on his approach. After a few commonplace inquiries concerning her health, the length of her stay in the country, and relative to Mrs. Herbert, whom he had not had time to call on whilst in town, he proceeded to remark that his time was so engrossed by increasing responsible duties, that he had been unable to maintain that regularity in their correspondence that he had hoped and promised to do. Although Miss Herbert made no reply, had he looked into her face he would have observed the impatient air and gathering frown; but as he proceeded to express his fears for the future with a studied coolness, she interrupted him, and, with a simulated indifference of manner, begged he would not permit any thought of her to interfere with what was evidently of far more importance to himself, and with duties that appeared to have so paramount a claim on all his time, dwelling on the monosyllable 'all,' adding, with a still greater effort to conceal the bitterness of her disappointment, 'I fear your presence here must have been at great sacrifice to yourself, and trust it will not result in any greater, by the loss of so many precious moments.'

Aubrey Grey was too conversant with efforts to conceal meanings not to be at once aware of Miss Herbert's intention, and as he looked into her face, which, notwithstanding its delicate complexion, was at that moment tinged with a mantling flush, and lit up by the flash of her dark-blue eyes, imparting a severity to her matchless features, he became sensible of its power, and, changing his respectful courtly tone to one of greater familiarity and warmth, took her thin white hand, through which the purple veins so prominently swelled, and, with an involuntary pressure, said, 'Bertha, you are severe.'

'Severe in the expression of a wish that must be *now* so much in accord with your own, judging from your words and manner? Would you have me so egotistical as to intimate the slightest wish to divert your thoughts from considerations of such moment to—to'—

'To yourself,' interrupted Mr. Grey, withdrawing his hand, nettled that his advance had not been more graciously received; 'for that is the *deity* to which you deem honour, prospects, and status should be sacrificed.'

Drawing herself up, and throwing into her features a disdainful smile, she reiterated his words,—'Sacrificed! honour and standing sacrificed! If by such language you imply the abandonment of those prospects, on which you lay such stress, apparently to the exclusion of *other* considerations,—No, sir. But if, as the ultimate reward of your aspirations, to be *then* laid on the altar of a devoted shrine, that would have burned the more intensely to burnish and irradiate their brilliancy for the sake of the offerer,—Yes, sir.' Then hesitating, as though another and more painful thought had darted through her brain, she continued, 'But it may be that in neither of these suppositions have I interpreted you aright. The sacrifice may have a more personal reference.'

'Miss Herbert!' exclaimed Mr. Grey, aroused by her stern and supercilious manner, 'personal considerations I had thought you had hitherto given me the credit of being ready to waive.'

'And is that the literal, the humiliating rendering of what [illegible] until now been disguised, because couched in language which I doubt not *Mr.* Grey is becoming daily more proficient?' This was uttered with an asperity provoked not only by the personal insinuation, but by the formal manner in which it was prefaced in the use of her name. Stung by the taunt, he replied,—

'If I owe my proficiency in such ability to disguise to my present occupation, as your remark seems to imply, it has at least been attained subsequent to my earlier acquaintance with Miss Herbert,'—the young lady frowned at this continued mode of addressing her,—'consequently the utterances of previous years could not have been affected by such a training.'

'And therefore were received as the expressions of a truthful, guileless heart. But a truce to such hectoring.' She looked cautiously around the room, as though to satisfy herself they were alone, and then towards the open door, after which, raising her eyes to his, which drooped under her piercing gaze, she proceeded in a lower tone of voice, at times tremulous from the effort to control her emotions, 'Aubrey, the time for all considerations of the kind hinted at is gone, and with it the need for such enigmatical language. I cannot, however, pass on to what at this interview *must* be said, without reminding you, in response to the insinuation that has just escaped you, that others as favourably situated, and of as gentle blood as yourself, but whom your attentions compelled to stand aside, would long ere this have placed me in that position which your unanticipated pleas have presented as obstacles to your doing. But there are considerations that must now outweigh *your* further scruples and *my* submission thereto. I need not emphasize them,—my sister, whose prospects must not continue to be injured by my enforced seclusion; my parent, who cannot much longer be trifled with; and, still more imperative'—

'But, Bertha,' interposed Mr. Grey, with some agitation, 'you have mistaken me.'

'Permit me to conclude. This distressing state of things must, come to an end,—it canno tcontinue. I therefore appeal to you, before the power is taken out of your hands, to act generously and manly,—to terminate it.' The flash was gone, and her eyes had melted into tenderness as they still continued to gaze into his face, telling how much her heart was at war with her sense of duty.

Aubrey Grey was moved, and, taking her hand into his, he said remonstratingly, 'Bertha, another year, and the hindrance may be removed.'

'Another year! How often has that been the procrastinating reply? Another year, before the yearnings of my heart can be realized, or I be permitted to clasp thereto *that beauteous idol.* Another—another, before I can avow or be avowed!'

'I know I have tested your love and forbearance to the utmost; but just as I am reaching the goal of my ambition, and when there could no longer exist the same necessity for silence, would you have me ruin all by a precipitancy that would deprive us at least of one portion of the reward?'

'How painful to find myself thus circumstanced towards one whose future would be cloudless but for the speck already above the horizon! Would that I could have foreseen our positions of to-day! My life a subterfuge!'—she stopped and repeated the word,—'a subterfuge;' then, raising her voice as though stirred to the utmost at the bare thought, she exclaimed with vehemence, 'It must end! Aubrey Grey, by our plighted vows, I entreat, nay, I demand an avowal!'

He started at the energy with which these last words were uttered, and his countenance assumed an expression of anger, but which was quickly mastered, and, dissembling, he replied, 'Not now, Bertha, surely not now; it would be simply ruin.'

'It will ere long be that to me, and which, did it affect myself alone, would be terrible enough, but it involves others, and therefore I demand that which I have the right to ask at your hands. Your abilities, well attested by this time, must have ensured you a standing that will place you beyond the reach of family influence; and whatever difficulties the latter may present, you have both the courage to face and the force to overcome them, and thereby remove an incubus that must have at times operated adversely, even to yourself.'

'Nay, knowing the devotion of the only one that could have occasioned any adverse interposition, I have not experienced anything of the sort, nor have I been weighted by any anxiety in relation thereto.'

Adroitly as Mr. Grey had commenced this sentence, the conclusion thereof was unfortunate, as he instantly learned.

'It is indeed very gratifying to learn this, and from your own lips too. So engaged in fashionable excess or political intrigue, so courted and surrounded by incentives to enjoyment, in the eager pursuit of pleasure and fame everything else is forgotten. No shade of suspicion to dull *your* bright honour, no tinge of shame to redden *your* cheek,—so transparent, so incapable of any act of doubtful name, that calumny dare not traverse its fair fame, nor breathe a word against it; whilst *I*, slighted and forgotten, abashed by my conscious dubious position, may hide my head, pine and mourn and weep until my heart breaks, and rids

me of a life become intolerable!' The bitterness and sarcasm of tone and manner in which this was uttered imparted a complete transformation to her whole bearing, and as she rose from her seat the astounded man regarded her with awe, as she lifted her arm, and exclaimed in a resolute voice, 'Aubrey Grey, I am your *wife*, and will proclaim it.' As she said this she faltered, as though alarmed at her words. Her cheeks and her hands became blanched, as though her blood had stagnated at the fountain, and she sank upon the couch.

Mr. Grey rose and walked to the door, deeply agitated; the cool air was grateful. Presently he turned and paced the room, returning again to the door, until at length he approached the sofa, partially collected, and, addressing her in a mild, subdued tone, said, 'Bertha, you have spoken under momentary excitement, for which you have undoubtedly had sufficient cause. I plead nothing in extenuation, but throw myself on your generosity and—may I still claim it?—love. Do not be angry if I again venture to refer to the difficulties of my position, but which, as I have intimated, will ere long be entirely surmounted. During their long continuance,'—he seated himself by her side, and, taking her hand in his, pressed it as he continued,—'ever the brave, devoted woman I have esteemed you to be, you have by your noble conduct thus far potentially contributed to my success. Your correspondence has cheered me on; and the pride I have been the subject of, as I anticipated the part such a woman was destined to take in my future, has buoyed me up in the arduous struggle. And would you now, when the mark is in sight, dash the prize from my grasp?—you, for whom I will yet, if you so imperatively demand, surrender all,—all those prospects of a pecuniary, family, or public nature, now more than ever rising in such palpable nearness of realization, and the attainment of which removes, or rather places me beyond the reach of, those circumstances that have hitherto prevented me doing you that justice and placing you in that position which, apart from your devotion, nature as well as talent, has fitted you to adorn, and on which none would more proudly witness your *entrée* than myself.' As he concluded this flattering address, he passed his arm around her waist and imprinted a kiss on her lips.

Bertha buried her face in her handkerchief, but made no reply.

'Am I to construe your silence into an acquiescence in my wishes?' said Mr. Grey, after waiting for a few seconds, his arm still encircling her waist.

'The suspense,' said Bertha, her altered tone evincing the influence his words and conduct were having over her enslaved heart, 'is fraught with agony to myself. Of late I have had some misgivings that those who, next to yourself, are as precious to me as my own soul, are becoming dissatisfied, if not worse; whilst advantage is being taken by another, whom I detest, of his possession of what is cruelly misconstrued into a guilty secret, to accomplish his infamous ends, as I have already made you aware.'

'Believe me, love, these are the imaginings of a too sensitive nature, and have no other foundation than in a too refined susceptibility.'

Bertha did not controvert this suggestion; she was fast yielding to the persuasive appeal of one whose sway over her was too potent to effectually resist. Whether that appeal had been couched in language now becoming too habitual in his intercourse with those amongst whom his official position rendered it desirable to make words the vehicle in which to disguise the thoughts, time would show; but, leaning her head confidingly on his shoulder, she whispered, 'There would be no impropriety in naming our relationship to one whose love and happiness is interwoven with my own, and whose confidence could be implicitly relied on.'

'And who could be so confided in, my love?'

'Harriet.'

'Impossible. At present it is absolutely expedient that all remain in our own keeping; the fact of its clandestine nature, performed in a foreign country, giving rise to questions of legality, might operate adversely to all.'

'But Harriet is too discreet,' said she, without paying attention to the reasons of his objection.

'Bertha, love, I do not mistrust your sister's discretion, but the disclosure, even to her, would lead to inquiries on her part that at present it were better not to occasion; and you know full well her impetuous nature would not be satisfied with a mere avowal, and that you would be constantly teased and worried for explanations that you are unprepared to give. Cannot you add, dearest, to your hitherto unbounded trust in one to whom you are more precious than to sister or parent, this continued proof of your confidence and devotion?'

Miss Herbert smiled a sad smile, and, sighing as he pressed her to his bosom, responded faintly, 'I cannot refuse.'

'*Noble woman!*' said he, as he pressed her again to his

breast, and imprinted a kiss on her lips. After some further assurances of constancy and regard for her happiness, and exhortations to guard her mind against depressing influences for the sake of both, as well as her health, he rose to depart, having, as he avowed, overstepped his time.

Harriet rejoined them, and with her sister accompanied him to the carriage, before entering which she rallied him on his flying visit, and exacted a promise, on her sister's behalf, that his correspondence should be more regular.

The parting was all that could be desired, and in some measure atoned for the coldness of the meeting. Supported by Harriet, Bertha remained watching the carriage by the moonlight, until it receded from their view, and the chilliness of the night warned them to return to the house.

It was not until the lapse of an hour or two after his departure, when retiring to bed, and her jaded spirit had partially recovered from the excitement of the interview, that she became sufficiently collected to review what had passed between herself and Aubrey Grey, and as she did so she could not dismiss painful suspicions that began to float through her mind. She had never before questioned his sincerity; but as she now recalled his sudden change from an almost cold, formal manner, at the earlier part of their conversation, to the converse after her indignant outburst, that in other days would have been more likely to provoke than conciliate, she could not but be sensible of a change.

As she rose from the easy-chair into which she had thrown herself whilst listening to these suggestions, relieved by a flood of tears, she endeavoured to banish them, and by the time she had completed her disrobing and laid down to rest she had partially succeeded. But as she fell into a fitful slumber, the wicked sprite that had crept into her chamber, and already tortured her by his reminders whilst awake, envious of her restored peace, perched on her pillow, and touched the odylic fluid and sent it back to the oppressed brain; and now the memory confusedly recalls the words, 'clandestine,' 'foreign country,' 'legality,'—with what effect her quivering nerves attest; whilst a microphone would have revealed the inaudible cry of anguish, as also the rebuttal of each injected doubt, as, prompted by her feverish heart, she controverts the unpitying elf, and points to—

'The revival of her old ascendency, and his forbearance under provocation!'

The sprite suggests,—'That was assumed,—masterly control.'

'The appeal to past devotion.'

Sprite,—'*Past* devotion.'

'The endearing expressions of heart and hand.'

Sprite,—'Simulated.'

'Protestations of unending constancy.'

Sprite,—'Ending in inconstancy.'

'The recognition of her unwearied devotion, and the spontaneous allusions to talents and personal qualifications for her prospective position.'

Sprite,—'Flattery.'

'Could he—would he dare?' The weakness implied by such a suggestion caused an energetic repudiation thereof, that so disturbed her that she awoke. Troubled by her dreamy contest, she lay musing thereon, and as each thought recurred to her mind, eagerly combated the impression left, by dwelling on his apparent submission to her will,—he only pleading, in deference thereto, a short season of grace, thus evidencing the hold she still possessed of his affections. True, ambition—but a laudable one—was exerting a powerful influence that crowded many of the illusions of inexperienced days out of his imagination, but his love was as ardent as ever. It, too, might possibly be crowded, but it was there, and nothing could crowd it *out*. Thus she reasoned against injected doubts which refused to remain convinced, until, unable to bear the agitation caused thereby, she rose and knelt by her bedside to implore that help she so needed, and that could alone yield a balm to her wounded spirit. Somewhat calmed, she returned to her bed, and for a few hours enjoyed a reprieve.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DOGMATICAL—PRINTING NOT WRITING.

'A WAS an archer, and shot at a frog; B was a butcher, and had a great dog; C was—C was—a—a—let me see, now, what was C? Dear me, and I learnt that at school the first thing, that I shouldn't forget my letters. C was,—bother it, I declare I'm getting to forget everything. I'd no call to, for it wasn't a great deal I stowed away in my knowledge-box. Well, I remember how it ended,—Y was u,—I don't see how that could be. O no, I have it now,—Y was a youth, and they sent him to school,—might as well kept him at home for all he learnt; Z was a Zany, a very great fool,—and so he is. I wonder how we came to know that, though; but we did, and so he is,—a *precious* fool. Look at that,' muttered Mr. Skeggs to himself, of whose meditations the foregoing formed a small portion, as he sat one morning in November at his desk, his head supported by his two arms, the elbows of which were resting on the pad, whilst his eyes were poring intently over a sheet of paper, very closely and illegibly written on, the composition of which must have been as perplexing to its author, Mr. Zenas Hawkes, as the translation appeared to be to Octavius, seeing it contained as many ink erasures as words.

'Look at that! how does he or any man expect that I'm going to make that out?' Whereupon, presumably in reply to the demand, and to mark his estimation thereof, he thrust the ruler under the paper, and pitched it off his desk, or rather intended to do so, for it alighted on the further corner thereof, still presenting its blurred face for his inspection, which provoked him to a further effort to accomplish his original intention. Just then the sound of a step at the foot of the stairs changed his purpose, and, hastily replacing it on his pad, he commenced a renewed effort to decipher it; but as no one ascended the stairs,

after waiting sufficiently long to allow time to do so, he rose from his stool and went over to an old box in the further corner of the room, half full of shavings, in which was curled up, its nose under its hind leg, a small, half-starved mongrel dog, which had that morning, on his way to the office, come into his possession in the following manner.

On entering the Bury, he caught sight of Winkles the porter just turning into Walbrook, and hailed him, with the design of obtaining any news of the day that might affect himself, when Winkles informed him that he was on his way, with a dog that he had under his arm, to the Thames, by the direction of one of the clerks in the Yard, whose pay being insufficient to support himself and dog, he had commissioned the porter to anchor the latter in the river. Mr. Skeggs' compassion was excited, and protesting, against such a heartless procedure, he expressed himself as half a mind to keep it himself,—an idea that Winkles immediately encouraged, the job being one he had no particular relish for; and thereupon he commenced to expatiate upon its many good *points*, which, upon an examination thereof, as they retired into a doorway, Mr. Skeggs was constrained to admit, but, not being so well up in canine conformations as the porter, amongst so many points as his emaciated carcase presented, he was obliged to request him to indicate which were the *good* ones. This Winkles did so artistically and *dog*matically as at once determined Mr. Skeggs to become the owner thereof.

On acquiring possession of his treasure, it immediately became a source of some speculation what he should do with it, as his landlady had an antipathy to dogs and cats, when the happy thought suggested itself that he could present it to Miss Arabella, whose fondness for such animals had very much affected him, she having already been the means of saving half-a-dozen and more puppies, and an equal number of kittens, from a watery grave, and for whom she procured protectors.

'Ain't he a beauty!' said Mr. Skeggs to himself, as he stooped down to admire the mangy-looking animal as it lay in the box. How she'll prize it!' Thereupon, quite taken by its appearance, he commenced talking to it in the tone in which such small animals are usually addressed,—'Little doggy—pretty doggy—little fat doggy.' Whether doggy detected anything derisive in the last words, or experienced some degree of irritation at having his slumber disturbed, he very ungraciously snarled, and made a sudden snap at his new master's fingers,—a proceeding that

caused that person as suddenly to withdraw his hand, and cease any further caresses in that style. As Mr. Skeggs stood over the box, endeavouring to account for such ungrateful behaviour, it occurred to him that in all probability he had not yet broken his fast, and therefore had mistaken his fingers for his breakfast. Thereupon he stepped down to the Yard, and requested Winkles to get him some cat's meat when the old woman went past with her barrow, at the same time informing him that he was going to turn out a splendid animal, and make the best watch-dog he ever knew, and he meant to call him Blucher, because he was so fierce.

'I know'd it,' said Winkles, 'I know'd you'd like him; very 'igh breed, Mr. Skeggs. Warn't it lucky you met me?' And thereupon it occurred to him that, as he had been promised a trifle for the anchoring job, he might further profit in the transaction by obtaining a *douceur* from the new owner, who was so captivated with his acquisition. 'Yes, it were the luckiest chance, which I might have given him away afore I'd got to the end o' the street. Bradbury and Jones' clerk was just a-wanting such a dog. Come to think on't, I'd ha' sold him, so I would. I'd a got a site for him.'

'Sold him,—who to?' said Skeggs, whose appreciation of his bargain was increased by this information.

'Oh, a fellow as steals dogs when he can, an' buys 'em when he can't; I knows he's short o' dogs just now.'

'Why, what does he do with them?'

'Do? why, he sews 'em up in long 'airy white skins, and sells 'em again to ladies as lives at the West End; and when they bursts theirselves (which they does by overfeeding), they runs home, and he sews them up agin, and sells 'em agin.'

'Does he? I'll have to watch Blucher; he's a valuable dog.'

'B'lieve ye. Ye may say that; he'd give a site for him. I say, you won't mind givin' us a bob to wet it? I'd get double that for him.'

'Oh, now, really, I thought you gave it me, and you see he's going to cost something to keep him.'

Mr. Winkles was about to enforce his demand by some additional and cogent reasons, but at that moment Mr. Hiram Hawkes turned the corner of the Yard, and Mr. Skeggs disappeared up the stairs, the porter shouting after him to ''sidder on it,' and then walked to the Bury to look out for the cat's-meat woman, touching his hat to Mr. Hawkes as he passed him.

On entering the office, the attorney directed his clerk to collect

all the papers in 'Scarr and others *versus* Jenkins,' and deposit them in the bag. Whilst so employed, it becomes necessary, in Mr. Figgins' expressive words, to see 'where we are,' and which, as briefly as possible may be thus summed up :—

The opposing attorneys in the suit being men of good practice and standing, and having no special reason for delay in their client's interest, had fallen in with Mr. Hawkes' unprecedented humour to hasten it on for trial, but which, Mr. Hawkes was sagacious enough to argue, did not look well for his clients. It had been set down for trial at the Michaelmas term, but, owing to the number of causes before it, it had been concluded it would be a remand to the next, if not a still more subsequent law-term. However, as occasionally happens, so many, from want of preparedness, as well as settlement by arbitration, withdrawal, and other causes, had been struck out of the list, that it had been ascertained that it was likely to 'come on' at the Guildhall this morning.

By his plea it was evident the defendant had no intention of laying great stress on an objectionable title, although it had been demurred to, and by his reticent mode he had rather puzzled Mr. Hawkes as to the particular way in which to shape his own course, especially as, two or three days prior to the delivery of his brief to counsel, his clerk had been subpœnaed as a witness on the other side, the intention of which, though not apparent, was construed into an effort at revelations, not, of course, desirable in the interest of his clients.

But whatever significance the proceeding had in Mr. Hawkes' eyes, to Mr. Skeggs personally it had a very intelligible meaning, for the service of the said writ had been accompanied by a fee of ten shillings, and that, too, in gold, the only time within his memory that he had, apart from his weekly salary, been the recipient of so large an amount at one time.

It had occasioned him, however, a great deal of interference with his routine duties whilst discussing the items of expenditure the outlay thereof would necessitate. Into these calculations, as a matter of course, Miss Arabella entered very largely, and the number of articles decided on would have added very considerably to her small stock of jewellery, but that the subject had always to be deferred for further consideration, owing to the impossibility of making the aforesaid half-sovereign cover a twentieth part of the cost of the articles set down on the list, and daily added to.

But whilst thus conforming to legal usage in postponing the decision *sine die*, the occasion of this disquietude, on the other hand, became a specific, the touch whereof, as he dived down to the bottom of his deep pocket, tended to allay any trepidation that occurred on his reverting to the ordeal that awaited him as the 'witness in the box.' He resorted thereto at first only in homœopathic doses, but, from the very instantaneous effect produced, he at length availed himself thereof to an allopathic extent, in every case of a disturbed equilibrium.

'Now, Mr. Skeggs,' said the attorney, as that person entered the latter's room with the green bag containing the papers in the suit, 'I need not remind you, in the forthcoming examination, of those principles so strongly inculcated on every member of this firm,—"the truth, and nothing but the truth,"—especially as nothing transpires in this office that would not bear the light of day. At the same time, there must be no betrayal of that confidence necessarily reposed in one in your position. And then, as you must be perfectly aware from experience, there are certain ways of giving evidence that render a witness very valuable to those whom it is his duty and interest to assist; for instance, some things are better unknown or forgotten, and need not be said,—*must* not be. But as counsel is apt to take you off your guard, and you are rather impulsive, Mr. Skeggs, let me advise you, before replying to any question, always to count three,—one—two—three,—which will afford you time to collect your thoughts and make the proper reply, and as I am sure it will add to the effect, you will at the same time look at me and read my meaning.'

Mr. Skeggs, of course, assented to the wisdom of his instructions; but as those instructions revived the thought of the process through which he was about to pass, a fresh attack of the nerves was the result, and he was constrained to an immediate application of his metallic antidote, which restored him sufficiently to enable him to control any outward emotion, but did not add to his ability to take in all the excellent counsel of the attorney, as he continued to elaborate his moral ideas of evidence, mental abstraction not being a faculty in which Octavius excelled.

'I make it a rule, Skeggs,'—the attorney was becoming unusually familiar,—'ever to ask conscience, Is it right? and then await its monitions.' He turned his eyes towards the familiar spot in the ceiling. 'If it says it's right, I do it; if it says it's

not right (and won't pay),'—this was added parenthetically,—'whatever the grovelling worldling may say, I don't hesitate. I say, conscience first! And conscience says, "Don't betray the trust reposed in you; your client's interests are yours;" and, however painful to my feelings, I stick to that, and say only what is for his interest,—nothing else; and nothing can shake me. Do you see the *point*, Skeggs?' said Mr. Hawkes, anxious to ascertain if he had conveyed the correct idea into his clerk's cranium, fearful that some indiscretion on his part might damage the case.

As intimated, Mr. Skeggs' mind, unable to concentrate itself, was apt to wander, and, concluding he was only undergoing another ethical exposition, of daily occurrence, he had ceased to follow the attorney, and just then was under the illusion that he heard the outer door open, and that it was Winkles with the liver. Seeing he hesitated, Mr. Hawkes put the question again, and demanded with some asperity 'if he *saw* the *point*.'

Confused by Mr. Hawkes' sudden irritation, a vague idea crossed Mr. Skeggs that the question had some reference to the *points* so specially dwelt on by the porter as distinguishing Blucher, and, without waiting a second thought, he exclaimed, 'Yes, yes; he saw them! Winkles showed them to him a little while ago.'

'Showed what?' exclaimed the astonished attorney, leaning back in his chair, and regarding his clerk with a misgiving that he had been having a conversation with the person named on the subject of the action, and probably confided to his keeping something injuriously affecting their proceedings.

'The dog!' shouted Skeggs, unable to control himself, as, with a sudden start, he bounded into the next room, whence an extraordinary yelling at that moment reached their ears, followed by the attorney, no less excited than himself.

As they burst into the room, they were just in time to catch a glimpse of the receding coat-tails of Mr. Zenas, as that gentleman was making all haste to the head of the staircase, and where they arrived in time to witness the ignominious expulsion of the cause of this commotion, the young lawyer having carried Blucher to that spot by the string attached to his neck, and at the moment of their appearance threw him to the bottom of the stairs. But, as fate would have it, Mr. Winkles was in the act of stepping on the first tread with a choice piece of liver on a skewer, and, as a consequence, the unfortunate cur alighted on the head and

shoulders of the equally unfortunate porter, thereby not only demolishing his paper cap, but sending him sprawling on to the pavement.

The interposition, however, had been favourable to the quadruped, who, gathering himself up, took to his heels, yelping in a frantic manner, followed by two dogs in hot chase, a third, starting a little higher up, being arrested on his way by the liver, which had been jerked to some distance, with which he made off. Whether Blucher hurried to the river to consummate the act contemplated in the morning, or fell into the possession of some dog-fancier or otherwise, did not transpire, as he 'never was heard of more.'

As for the porter, scrambling up with all speed, he made for the stairs, and, under the delusion that Mr. Skeggs was the offending party, in a state of excessive wrathiness commenced the ascent, exclaiming as he went, 'By jingo! you lawyer's fag! you hanged quill-driver! if I don't pay you out for that, my name's not Winkles!'

Mr. Skeggs, in his deep anxiety for the fate of his canine, was in the act of descending, but, quickly taking in the serious, consequences that might ensue to himself if he continued in that direction, with an instinctive regard to self-preservation he turned tail and retreated upwards, and had gained the last step but one, when the irate porter made a desperate lunge, and caught him by the said tail.

'Stop, Winkles!' shrieked Skeggs; ''t wasn't me!'

'By jingo!' exclaimed the porter, 'if I don't chuck you down for that!' which he would have done, but that, with great presence of mind, Skeggs caught hold of Mr. Zenas, who at that moment was turning round to avoid any unpleasant result, and who, finding himself receding in his turn, in an unusually affectionate manner embraced his paternal relative, and in another second, porter, clerk, and the two attorneys were performing a somersault from the top to the bottom of the stairs, where they finally lay in an indiscriminate heap.

Doors and windows intimated that an alarm had spread amongst the immediate neighbourhood, as principals, clerks, and housekeepers made their appearance thereat, whilst two or three, bolder than the rest, ventured to approach and examine into the nature of the heap, and thereupon proffered their assistance in raising the quartette to an upright position. When joined by the rest, they commenced a series of questionings; but as the actors

in the scene were necessarily busied in attending to their damaged persons, no satisfaction was obtained. Whereupon they fell to surmising, and finally decided they were all drunk,—a conclusion further confirmed by the housekeeper two doors down, who avowed she 'often seed Bill go past with a jug, and so knowed it wurn't no fit,' as suggested by the next door.

The casualties, however, may be summed up thus:—Porter, —who, ascertaining with whom he had meddled, limped off,—a sprained ankle, a large lump on his forehead, and, being undermost, bruises all over; Skeggs, one hand scraped, and shoulder black and blue,—at first he insisted it was dislocated, but abandoned that idea upon its being caught hold of and tugged at by the charwoman and a warehouseman, whom he begged to desist before they pulled it off altogether; Mr. Zenas, a battered head and lame leg, that necessitated his return home in a cab. Whilst, beyond the fright and mortification, Mr. Hawkes escaped unhurt, probably on account of his alighting on the top of all, though set down by himself to the miraculous interference of a mysterious providence that always shielded him, which might have had some weight, but that the aforesaid housekeeper wickedly insinuated 'that the devil's allers good to his hone, which he his.'

The punishment accorded the rest, and his own immunity, had such an exhilarating effect on Mr. Hawkes, that, beyond a few admonitory counsels and rebukes, that personage refrained from any exhibition of temper, contenting himself by drawing especial attention to the fact, as just demonstrated, of the remarkable way in which evil doings bring their own punishment, at times involving even the innocent, but who are specially protected. The Philistines in the yard, of course, made merry at the event, which served them for a fling at Winkles on opportune occasions.

How it originated was simply in this way. Whilst Mr. Skeggs was receiving his lesson on the nature of evidence, Mr. Zenas had entered the outer office, and, as customary, after inspecting the former's desk, was taking a survey of the room, when his attention was attracted to the box. Stooping down, he thrust his hand therein to ascertain the contents, and in doing so introduced his fingers into the mouth of the cur, whose hunger had not been diminished by the delay of the dog's meat; thereupon 'little doggy' gave a voracious snap at the said fingers, causing Mr. Zenas to cry out with pain and consternation. Kicking over the box, as the animal rolled out, he seized the string, and,

savagely dragging him to the stairs, occasioned the outcry and the result narrated.

Delayed by this adventure beyond the time, the attorney hurried off to Guildhall, leaving Skeggs to follow with the bag and its contents at a more leisurely pace, and who, on arrival, found the former awaiting him at the entrance.

'Clar the way there! Make way for counsel!' cried the crier; whereat all eyes were turned towards a very stout perspiring individual, habited in flowing black silk gown, white bands, and curled wig well greased and powdered, in whose rear Messrs. Hawkes and Skeggs were about to avail themselves of the opportunity to make their way into the crowded court, but were elbowed out by the crier to give place to another brother of the long robe, the antithesis of the first; which action the said official followed up by rudely pushing on to their toes, first a young gentleman arrayed in his best, who thereupon looked very savage, and then a young lady with a pleasant, attractive face, who, as she smiled at the former, under whose protection she appeared to be, showed she was taking it all in good part.

'Don't push that pretty girl in that way,' remonstrated Mr. Skeggs, his gallantry getting the better of his awe of the august official.

'Brains before beauty,' responded the crier in the same drawling tone, at the same time pushing Mr. Skeggs himself back to make way for some other 'wigs,' thereby additionally impressing the crowd, especially those persons whose presence there was by express invitation, the document conveying that request intimating that any failure thereof would be at their peril, and yet whose presence there appeared equally perilous.

The preliminary proceedings, on opening the court, having been gone through, and the docket taken up, the cause of 'Scarr and another, Trustees, *versus* B. Jenkins' was announced as the first on the roll for trial, but which, as flippantly and carelessly uttered by the gentleman seated below the judge, who had charge of the docket, sounded like, 'Scaring a trustee verses by Jenkins.' Thereupon the counsel on both sides certified that they were ready, and the jury were duly sworn. The junior counsel for the plaintiff rose and stated the case in brief, at the same time handing in such documents as were intended to be put in as evidence, and which were not objected to by the other side, a proceeding that rather posed Mr. Hawkes. On resuming his seat, the junior was followed by a learned senior, who made

the case so plain that the jury felt quite impatient of any further delay in taking their verdict, protesting to their foreman against its necessity; being probably of the same view as the sagacious country justice, who made it a rule of *his* court never to hear but one side, for the very pertinent reason, as he honestly declared, that when he heard both sides it always confused him, and rendered the decision much more perplexing than it would have been in the earlier stage. However, as such rule had not yet been adopted by the higher courts, the case proceeded.

What tended to the simplification of the matter, the plaintiff's counsel, apart from his eloquent address, had, after proof of sale, confined himself to one document, on which he laid the greatest stress, and which certainly spoke for itself, it being the agreement or undertaking pointed out by Mr. Hawkes to his clients at the time the purchaser first declined to complete the transaction, and endorsed on the back of one of the auctioneer's printed bills of sale, whereby the defendant bound himself to complete the purchase on the production of a sufficient title, which latter did not appear to be contested.

At the request of the opposing junior counsel, the document was handed to him for examination, which having undergone, and declining to admit the same, 'Jessie Jenkins' was called, with the intention of proving her father's signature thereto, she having witnessed the same. After undergoing the usual variation of name, and the person indicated at length satisfied she was the party intended, she took her stand in the box under a new cognomen, but which, after some further twistings, and due remonstrances on the part of the young lady herself, got back to something resembling the original. As this witness ascended the steps, Mr. Skeggs recognised the same person that he had championed, and before whose beauty brains had been preferred. Having been duly sworn, and duly shocked by the apparent profanity in the indifferent *pro forma* way in which the oath was administered, the learned counsel, under the natural idea that she would not be a very willing witness, addressing her in a stern manner, began,—

'Now, Miss Bessy Jenks.'

'Eh?' interrupted the judge, 'I have it down Jessie.'

'Jessie,—O yes, me lud,' replied the counsel, looking at his brief, 'Jessie. Now, Jessie Jenks.'

'Is it Jenks or Jenkins?' interposed the judge again. No answer.

'Jenks or Jenkins?' repeated the learned judge.

'Why don't you answer his lordship?' said the counsel, who had been listening to a suggestion from Mr. Hawkes.

'Jessie, sir, is the name papa and mamma always call me at home,' replied the lass, now for the first time entertaining doubts of its correctness.

'I know, I know,' said the learned judge a little testily; 'but what's your surname?'

The young lady smiled and blushed, and looked confused, evidently misunderstanding the inquiry, and, with her eyes fixed on the bar,—that is, the wooden one,—commenced nervously drawing her pretty white hands backwards and forwards thereon.

'What's the matter, my good girl? Why don't you answer? What is it?' said the judge in an encouraging tone.

Upon which she turned very modestly towards the bench, and in a half whisper, as though intended for its ear alone, said, 'Please, sir—my lord, it's William.' This was uttered so softly that it did not reach the bar (not the wooden one this time), who thereupon made a loud demand that she would 'speak out,' the compliance with which might have led to some additional embarrassment, had not the considerate judge, who readily comprehended the little mistake, and, thus unwittingly made her confidant, come to her rescue, kindly suggesting, as he spoke loud enough to be heard by the counsel,—

'You say your name is Jenkins—Jessie Jenkins?'

'Yes, sir—my lord,' said the lass, with a sigh of relief, and which the learned judge acknowledged by a slight inclination of his head.

This difficulty having been overcome, and the additional information elicited that she was the daughter of the purchaser of the property at issue, the examination was proceeded with, and the genuineness of her own and her father's signature very naïvely avowed. Thereupon her further detention should have ended, but, a little nettled by his failure to learn the purport of her communication to the bench, which had occasioned so gracious a recognition therefrom, the learned senior continued his examination to an extent not at all warranted, under the hope of proving himself a match for his lordship.

As Miss Jenkins had, from the urbanity of the judge, come to regard him as her protector, she invariably turned towards him whilst replying to the embarrassing questions of the counsel, who thereupon addressed her with some acerbity,—

'I beg, Miss Jenkins, you don't let your eyes wander about in that way; look at me when I speak to you. Do you hear?'

'Yes, sir—my lord,' said the witness, her eyes, nevertheless, instinctively turning in the forbidden direction.

'But you don't do so. Don't you know you should look at the person who is speaking to you?—Tell me, when the defendant signed that document, did he make any objection?'

Miss Jenkins looked at the counsel, but, abashed by his rude stare, she turned nervously towards the judge, perplexed as to the meaning of the word defendant.

'Look at me, Miss Jenks!' exclaimed the barrister, in a tone that caused the young lady to start and turn towards him, but without raising her eyes. 'Did I not request you to look at me when I spoke? Don't you know you should look at me? don't you know *why?* Answer me.'

Miss Jenkins blushed, then stole a glance at the bench, but which was just then abstractedly chewing the top of a quill pen, and looking vacantly at the clock. Finding no help was likely to come from that quarter, she tried to look at her questioner, and in a low voice responded, 'No, sir.'

'Speak out,' said the gentleman of the silk gown. 'I ask you again the simple question, Don't you know why—why you should look at me?'

Becoming in her turn a little put out by this pertinacious mode of putting the question, she raised her head, and, looking the counsel in the face, replied, in a key loud enough to be heard by the bar in the front seats, 'Is it because you're so pretty?' then dropped her eyes and blushed.

The counsel's face reddened, as he became conscious of a titter around him, and, attracted thereby, the learned judge, who had not caught the words, requested to be informed what the young lady said, at the same time dipping his pen in the ink, and bending over his notes, prepared to take down the remark, which caused a renewed laugh, this time by a larger number, the reply having been rapidly communicated throughout the court, curious to ascertain the cause of any merriment in so lugubrious a place.

'What was it?' said the judge, his pen still on the paper, ready to take down the words.

'The young lady says, me lud, my learned friend's so pretty,' responded a brother of equal standing, or he would not have been likely to have volunteered the information.

'Can't say I admire her taste,' said the judge rather curtly, as he dropped his pen on the desk, and looked over at the bar, probably disappointed at the young lady's preference, though certainly no beauty himself, at least if beauty can be judged under a full-bottomed wig.

'Stand down,' said the crier, as the counsel on the other side intimated they had no questions to ask, the rebuffed barrister having taken his seat, disgusted at the declaration of the bench.

As Miss Jenkins descended from the box, somewhat mortified at allowing herself to be betrayed into such an exhibition of pertness, Mr. Skeggs advanced to offer his hand, deeming it his especial duty to attend to so interesting a witness on *their side*, but was supplanted by the genteel, good-looking young man before mentioned, whose eyes, as they met Miss Jessie's, lit up with animation, causing the bench, as it looked *accidentally* at the pretty retiring witness, to surmise that that was the owner of the name so guilelessly confided to its keeping.

The case for the plaintiff being thus brought to a close, the senior counsel on the other side arrived, just as his junior, who had prolonged his address for that purpose, completed the opening for the defence. After a brief consultation with his clients, and suffering from the effect of the speed with which he had hastened from another engagement,—his puffy scarlet face being streaked with the moisture generated under his well-pomatumed wig, which required frequent disturbance and readjustment to facilitate ventilation,—the learned gentleman, in no very amiable mood, made a few remarks in addition to what had been said by his junior, and then proceeded to direct that Octavius Skeggs be called.

'Stave Keggs! Stave Keggs!' shouted the court official, looking in the opposite direction to where that person was standing.

'Here,' shouted Mr. Skeggs, mounting the steps and entering the box with an affectation of indifference, hoping thereby to inspire his inquisitors with an amount of awe equal to what he himself experienced. During the effort to make the court sensible that his name was Octavius Skeggs, and whilst being sworn, the attorney for Jenkins enlightened the scarlet-faced counsel respecting the antagonism in which the witness might be supposed to stand to the defence, from his relation as clerk to the plaintiff's attorney; at the conclusion whereof, with a scowl that at once sent Mr. Skeggs' stock of effrontery into his shoes, he demanded to be informed of his name, and, being

satisfied in that particular, but during which the court got again slightly confused therein, demanded,—

'What's your occupation?'

'Clerk.'

'Clerk!—what clerk?'

'Lawyer's.'

'What lawyer?'

'Mr. Hawkes.'

'Who's Mr. Hawkes?'

'My governor.'

'Yes, yes, but who's your governor?'

'Mr. Hawkes.'

'Now, Mr. Clerk, if we have any more trifling here, sir'— He shook his head, and then his finger, and scowled, and the junior scowled, and then the judge; and then it appeared to Mr. Skeggs that all the bar and everybody else was scowling, whereat he felt rather uncomfortable, and changed his position from one leg to the other two or three times. Having, however, drawn from him the information that his governor was the attorney for the plaintiff, and duly impressed that fact on the bench and jury, the learned counsel continued, 'Mr. Skeggs,—I think you said that was your name?'

Mr. Skeggs assented.

'Are you any relation to the person of that name mentioned in the *Vicar of Wakefield?*'

As this was the first time Mr. Skeggs had ever heard of that renowned vicar, or, indeed, of vicars at all, he very properly replied, 'he did not know, but that it was not unlikely, as he had a distant relation of a name something like it, on his mother's side, living at Bethnal Green;' whereupon he was again admonished to take care and not trifle with the court.

'Do you know the plaintiff in this suit?'

'Not particularly.'

'What do you mean by that, sir? Do you mean to say that, as clerk in the attorney's office who conducts this suit, you are not acquainted with the plaintiff in this action?'

Mr. Skeggs suddenly recollected, and mentally counted one, two, three, and then looked over at Mr. Hawkes for an inspiration from that quarter, but none came.

'Well, we're waiting for a reply, which you seem very reluctant to give.'

'One, two, three,' Mr. Skeggs counted more rapidly, with his

eyes still fixed on Mr. Hawkes, but who, conscious that the opposition had an eye on him too, refrained from any recognition.

'Do you intend to answer my question?'

By this time the purport thereof had escaped Mr. Skeggs' memory, and, in the vain hope of recalling it, he was mechanically counting one, two, three.

'Speak, sir, or I'll have you committed,' shouted the barrister, at the same time striking his brief on the rail in front.

'One, two, three!' ejaculated Skeggs aloud, startled by this demonstration of the counsel, and looking rather wildly at him.

Quite a sensation ensued. The attention of the whole room was directed towards the witness; those nearest the box shrunk back, under the impression that the witness was about to add 'and away,' and make a bolt.

The jury whispered together. 'Something wrong with the witness,' suggested the defendant's attorney to the senior counsel. 'Shall I take that down, brother?' said the judge, the only person apparently unmoved.

'What's your duty in Mr. Hawkes' office?'

The witness concluded he would not try the counting method again, and, his hand having got into his pocket, and come in contact with the half-sovereign, he partially regained his composure, but before he could reply, the counsel anticipated him by suggesting that 'he supposed he swept the office, and dusted the furniture, and cleaned the windows, and such-like,' but which Mr. Skeggs very emphatically denied, giving, as a corroboration thereof, when further pressed, the fact that he did not remember any such interference therewith since he first was called to fill his responsible position as clerk therein. By this insinuation, intended to ruffle him, it was designed to throw Mr. Skeggs out of the track that lawyers' clerks in general, from their training, are assumed to take, and understand better than most witnesses how to keep in, and in which, from his manner thus far, it was concluded he was an adept. But though a little nettled at the derogatory assumption, he was becoming more self-possessed, and would doubtless have soon become proof, but that at this stage the learned counsel looked at his watch, and then at the clock, and became anxious to bring the case to a conclusion, doubtless having some other business elsewhere, and held a short consultation with the attorney for the defence.

Left thus to his own reflections, Mr. Skeggs pulled an orange

out of his coat pocket, purchased at the door on his entrance, and commenced disposing thereof on the sly, occasionally shooting the pips into a corner, in happy obliviousness of the surroundings, until, unintentionally raising his fingers too high, he hit the crier's pate, as that important functionary was in the act of wandering past. Thereupon the official turned upon him in a very indignant manner, and informed him, 'Mr. Keggs, if he didn't stop that he'd have him committed for contempt,' probably meaning of himself,—a state in which, it must be confessed, Mr. Skeggs had held him superlatively since he so rudely thrust the young lady aside. As this resulted in drawing upon him the attention of the court, he was ordered out of the box, much to his relief, and which, he could not help thinking, was worth the stray shot.

'I don't think, me lud, it will be necessary to detain your ludship and the gentlemen of the jury with any further defence than what I am about to offer, which, had my *other* duties enabled me to get down here sooner, I would have called your attention to at an earlier stage. Your ludship's attention is requested to the agreement on the back of the auctioneer's conditions of sale, put in by the plaintiff, and relied on as the principal proof in the case.' The document referred to was handed to the judge by the clerk of the court for his perusal.

'Yes, brother, I perceive the agreement, signed and witnessed, as already proved.'

'Now, me lud, on referring to the other side—the conditions,'—the judge turned to the place indicated,—'you will see the purchaser is to be bound to the performance of all the conditions therein stated by an agreement written on the back of the said conditions, to be duly signed by the said purchaser at the time of sale.' The judge read the conditions, and assented, whilst the plaintiff's attorney and counsel were becoming nervously alive to some unexpected *dénouement* to be instantly met and contested. As the learned counsel had a reputation for legal acumen, the attention of the whole bar and attending solicitors became attracted to the case.

'Now, me lud, these conditions refer to an agreement on the back thereof.' Increased attention throughout the court.

'Certainly; that's your case, brother?' said the judge, addressing the plaintiff's counsel, who slightly bowed, and then regarded the opposing counsel with a scrutinizing glance through his eyeglass.

'Does your ludship find any such thereon?' A stretching of necks throughout the court, as though to get a view of the document as the judge turned it over.

'What's this, brother?' said the learned judge, smiling as he pointed out the signed agreement, held up in his hand for inspection, and whereat the plaintiff's counsel smiled, and which smile was reciprocated by the objecting barrister, thereby restraining the rest of the bar from joining in.

'Will your ludship see if these words are correct?—"and at the time of sale shall duly sign the written agreement endorsed on the back of these conditions," and so on.'

The judge read the words, and assented.

'Now look at the agreement. Is that *written*, me lud?'

'Eh!'—interest of bar at the highest,—'written! no, it's printed.'

'Oh! ah! then that's not the agreement referred to, me lud.'

'How so?'

'Me lud, I maintain printing is not writing.' He bowed submissively, and amid the general hum that ensued the eminent man appeared unmoved. The bar, who had been gradually leaning over to catch the point, sank back to their seats, looked at each other, smiled approvingly, and made a note of the objection that 'printing is not writing.'

'Me lud,' exclaimed the plaintiff's counsel, rising with some astonishment, 'I maintain it's the same to all intents and purposes!'

'Have you any case, brother, that you can cite?' said the judge.'

'Printing writing!' exclaimed the other, 'you could see at once if terms become as loose as that, there's no longer any meaning in words.'

'But, me lud, I maintain the defendant has by his own act made it so,' retorted the plaintiff's counsel with energy.

'That, my learned brother knows as well as I, was not in his power to do, and I therefore ask your ludship again, is there any *written* agreement on that document, or has any such been produced? and if not, I ask your ludship's decision.'

The judge took up the paper again, turned it over, looked at it, and shook his head, and then, addressing the plaintiff's counsel, said, 'I am not prepared to say printing is writing,' which, being received as the decision of the bench, no further demur was

made thereto, and the jury was instructed accordingly. Whereupon Mr. Hawkes withdrew, followed by Skeggs, after the latter had gathered up the papers and deposited them in the bag.

The issue affords one more verification of Mr. Lander's remark, 'that the jurisprudence of every country will show that when law becomes a science and a system, it ceases to be justice,' the above being a veritable case.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BIRDIE'S FLIGHT.

'Y'ARE a mad-eeaded chap, tha's all aw ha' to say, an yoa'll be ketched.'

'You see if I am; I'm not going to stay here and be banged and kicked every day for nothing, and starved into the bargain.'

'Doan't 'ee allus ketch 'em as runs?'

'No, they didn't catch Brown, that ran before I came here.'

'Oh, ar,—cos'—

'Well, then, they won't catch me.'

'Ha'd thi tung, dedn't tha' ketch Mount?'

'Oh, he was stupid! any one would have caught him.'

'An' yoa're so fearfu' wise yersen.'

'I tell ye what, Mape, ye needn't go on that way. I mean to disguise myself, and then they'll not know me. I'm goin' to turn my coat inside out, and get an old straw hat, and smudge my face with dirt.'

'Tha needna do 'at, ye've muck enow on't.'

The foregoing conversation had been carried on in an undertone between Willie Wilton and Mape Harfagr, whilst sauntering together under the shade of the rookery, their arms around each other's waists. Arrived at the boundary wall, they turned and walked alongside of it, until, coming to the archway leading into the plantation, they entered and threw themselves on the ground, and resumed the subject.

Running away was a feat well understood in theory at all these kindred institutions, but so well provided against, that it was much less seldom indulged in than might have been imagined, from the frequency with which it engaged the thoughts and formed the topic of conversation among those interested in putting it into practice. It was regarded as the last resort. The record of former attempts and failures proclaimed it too hazardous. If

attempted, it was usually by a more recent arrival, goaded on by the contrast of his present life and treatment with that still so fresh in his mind, and towards which his yearnings constantly attracted him. Amongst the elder boys, whose sojourn had been long at the Academy, the idea of 'running' (themselves) had ceased to operate. Wherefore should they run who had nowhere to run to? But though such incentive was wanting in their own case, they were by no means averse to others indulging in the pastime, and consequently were not remiss in encouraging the design, and even instigating the less experienced to make the futile attempt.

The sensation that followed such an event was usually intense, and exceeded that produced by any other that occurred, even the unusual one of a boy leaving the place at the call of his friends, exciting as that was. The consternation of the authorities on the discovery of the flight was most enjoyable; the preparation for, and the pursuit, and the interim suspense, alternated by hopes and fears and numberless wild speculations during its continuance, rendered the boys almost uncontrollable, and drew forth some of their more savage instincts. Then there was the reaction, on the return of the pursuers in charge of the captured runaway, occasioning a new class of sensations,—the rapid toning down of an irresistible impulse that had started off several lads simultaneously, without waiting to declare their intention to 'run' too, but to whom a journey of some miles had afforded time for reconsideration, and, retracing their steps, they arrived in time to discover the wisdom of the latter course. But as such unusual occurrence was productive of some derangement of the ordinary routine and discipline of the school, damaging to the charm that hedged about these sanctums of an inevitable fate and an impassable bound, it necessitated for a time, if possible, more stringent measures for the repression of a mutinous spirit, that the experienced authorities were not slow in detecting.

The keen practical instincts of the masters and their assistants (familiar with the surrounding country, and the proclivities of the villagers), enabled them but too surely to get on the trail of the ill-fated runaway, whose capture and restoration to his 'Abyssinian' retreat, with the added exhilarating accompaniments to its renewed enjoyment, did not fail to impress his fellow juveniles with the Elysian character of their abode, and the hopelessness of any effort to escape to the outside world, and thus effectually crush out all aspirations for any other Elysium.

One instance had occurred in which a boy had eluded the pursuit, and got safe home, situated at not more than half the distance from which the greater part came. But this was more than set off by the result to another, who adopted a hitherto unattempted route, but which, subsequently ascertained, became as effectually blockaded as the rest, by the formation of alliances with agents henceforth interested in their detention. The boy in question, after severe and lengthened trials, eventually found his way to his home in London; but his disconcerted parents, on learning from his own lips the further great advantages offered by the establishment that he had so ungraciously absconded from,—advantages by inadvertency not enumerated in Mr. Kearas' list,—lost no time in sending him back to serve out the full time originally intended, and to undergo the salutary discipline that such ungenerous conduct demanded,—a proceeding that, more than any other, operated as a deterrent to other over-fond youths in repeating the experiment.

'Nah,' said Harfagr, as he finished the relation of the last incident, and one or two other failures, by way of discouraging his young friend, 'aw'd loike tha t' tell me t' way yoo'l coom abaht 't.'

'Oh, I won't go that way, catch me!' said Willie knowingly.

'Aw suddent thenk t' wad, nur nooan else.'

'Listen, then, and I'll tell ye.'

'Hod yer breath a minit.' Mape jumped up and went out on either side the archway and looked cautiously round; then, satisfied there were no eavesdroppers, he again laid himself down by his companion's side, informing him he could continue, only not to speak so loud.

'Did ye see that drove of oxen on the green this morning, Mape?'

'Ay ded aw, bud yo'd no frame to mak' off wi' thame?'

'Yes, I would; I saw the drovers eating their breakfast down the lane, and I went and got talking to them,' said Willie, raising his voice.

'Wisht! ev yo'd nobud wesper,' interrupted Harfagr, whose experience had told him that walls have ears. Lowering his voice, the boy continued,—

'And they said they wanted a boy to help them, and they would not mind taking me, and I'm going to-night when all are in bed.'

'Bud thu'r gooan?'

'O yes; but they told me where I'd find 'em next,—on the moor alongside the road, where they stay all night, and I'll overtake them by the morning.'

After a further argument *pro* and *con*, Harfagr became so interested in his young friend's intention, that he entered fully into it, and promised to assist; upon which a brief silence ensued, at length broken by Willie, who, looking up into Harfagr's face, said abruptly,—

'I like you, Mape.'

'Do 'ee? war fur? aw hasn't nowt to gie ye. Bud when yo'ar goan, who'll aw pardner wi'?'

'Oh, you'll soon get somebody else.'

'Noa, aw'll niver get noa moor; thur's nobud yersen as aw cud mak' up to; an' aw'm too gaumless a chap for onybody to ax. Noan iver ded afore you.' The tone in which these words were uttered showed that even poor Mape had not become so indurated by kicks and cuffs, and other approved modes of testifying any especial regard towards such waifs as himself, as to be insensible to other though less demonstrative tokens, that appealed to sensibilities he was not accredited with. That he should have been preferred next to Trelawney as a companion,—he who had hitherto been the butt of others,—was as new as it was flattering, and had at once called forth a strong regard towards his fragile junior.

'Aw'll 'av' noan to tak' care on, nor to care abaht ma as yoa ded, Woollie, bud aw mun try an bear 't; tha'lt noa be freatin' thasen abaht 'at.'

'Don't talk in that way, Mape; you make me feel bad.'

'How pleasin' yo'll be when t' hoam wi' yer owd mither an' faytherr; tha'lt be forgettin' schooil an' oll on us.'

'I won't forget you, though, Mape.' Willie looked up at Harfagr with an assuring regard as he said this.'

'Oh, 'at doan't signify; theer's nowt in ma to loike.'

'Yes, there is. I like you, and so will other new boys, cos you'll take their parts.

'New lods! aw'm noa wanting owt new.'

'And I'm going to find out where your mother lives, and tell her to send for you, and then see.'

'Ma mither! well, aw've monny a time thowt, when aw've heeard fowk talkin' o' their mithers and faythers, 'at aw niver had ony.'

'Ha! ha! exclaimed Willie, with an effort to laugh, but which

he checked as he looked into the doleful face of his friend. 'Never had any? yes, ye had; and you'll see I'll tell them all about ye, and then they'll send for ye; and if they don't, my father and moth—I mean Aunty and Mr. Grumphy—will, and you'll come and live with *us*, won't you, Mape?' He patted him on the back as he lay on his face.

The poor lad addressed raised himself on his hands, stirred by the energy with which these last words were uttered, and, moved by the dazy memory of long-ago days that they seemed to call up, stared at him for a few moments, then, overpowered by the emotions evoked, sank again on his face and sobbed outright.

'Why, what's the matter?' said Willie, alarmed at this outburst, and afraid he had said something he should not. 'Don't cry that way; what makes you?' Pressing his cheek close to the boy's hands, which were covering his smeared face, he put his arm around his neck, and whispered some words of comfort, until both were silent. Presently he rose to a sitting posture, followed by Harfagr, who began mopping his face with the palms and backs of his hands and coat-sleeves, and then in an altered tone exclaimed,—

'Dang it, aw've coom across oll sooarts o' lods here, bud the best aw iver met niver cud mak' sichen a fooil o' me.' At the commencement of this sentence Willie had withdrawn his hand from Harfagr's shoulder, on which it had been placed, and a cloud had settled on his face, but the other was too much affected to remark the action. Observing this, Willie took his hand in his, and in an expostulatory tone said,—

'Don't swear, Mape.'

'Swaar! dang it, nah; when ded aw swaar?'

'Oh, there you did it again.'

'Well, aw'm nawther a haufthick nur a hupper—hupper'—he meant to say hypocrite, but could not, as he said, 'frame to spaik 't.' Taking up a piece of broken stone, he commenced digging a hole in the ground, then stopped, and, as though responding to his thoughts, said, 'Weel, mebbe et's a' reight,—loikely enuff; an' aw'll ha' to go thro' wo 't, uv aw loike 't or noa.'

'And when I'm gone, Jesus will take care of you if you love Him.'

'Aw'm noa seekin' onyboady's care,' said Mape peevishly.

'But you don't know what I mean.'

'Noa, O noa! aw'm too gaumless, 't isn't much aw knows,' said Harfagr, in a rather testy tone. Willie was silenced, whilst

the other commenced refilling the hole he had dug, at the conclusion of which he jumped up, and, with Willie, strolled again into the rookery, exclaiming as they went, 'Soa tha'st mad' up t' mind t' run t'neet?'

'Yes; and you'll help me, won't you?'

'Hoap yoa? it 'ud be a sheepish soart uv a trick ev aw'd turn tail nah; but for a' 'at, aw allus thenk tha'lt niver be gettin' more nur a start, an nobud try it yonce. But there's nowt loike tryin', for arterwards tha'lt stand a chance o' bein' able to tak' care o' yersel'.' As they were now on their way to the school-room, the conversation ceased for the present.

Tradition asserted that more than one boy, belonging to the schools around, had in former days got safe to London by means of the drovers, whom they assisted, and who at regular periods were accustomed to pass with their herds from the north to the cattle fairs and markets on the road to London, and who, it was believed, with much adroitness and native shrewdness, always succeeded in concealing the runaway, and putting the pursuers off the track.

Some days previously Frendzburgh had been sounded on the subject, but had spoken so decidedly against the attempt, and put the matter so discouragingly before the lad, that Willie saw it was in vain to expect help from him; on the contrary, could Frendzburgh have entertained a thought that it was anything more than one of those epidemic ideas that he had been accustomed to during his sojourn at the school, and that usually passed away as suddenly as they arose, he would have taken prompt measures to defeat it, knowing how utterly hopeless was such an undertaking in one so young and inexperienced.

Willie was passing through a change such as would necessarily result from a fraternization with those with whom he was in such constant intercourse, and though, owing to the rare teaching of his earliest days, he was still the same ingenuous lad, sensitive and guileless, his perceptions of the characters of others, as well as the motives actuating them, were keener and truer, and were dispelling the halo that surrounded them on his first entering upon the actual and real outside of his primitive home. His immature reason, of course, often led him to erroneous conclusions and actions, but, quick to see his error, and taught by experience, he was daily becoming more wary, and guarded, and self-reliant. But in proportion as he became sensible of the deceptiveness of appearances, he sighed the more for his past untainted associa-

tions, and shrank into himself with a morbidness that induced a solitary separation from the hilarity and sportiveness of youth. In coming to a decision to attempt a flight from a place so uncongenial, he was moved thereto not only by the incessant longing for a return to those rendered the more endeared by the contrast, but, amongst other considerations, by the depressing influence occasioned at the thought that before long his best friend and protector would be gone, and the certainty that his lot would then become additionally hard under the unrestrained tyranny of his oppressors,—a prospect that, by anticipation, became unbearable, and therefore hastened his action. The bare idea that such a fate as Mape's and a few others awaited him, of an incarceration in those Bastilic premises until the outside world became only a pleasant memory, would of itself have been sufficient to have goaded him on.

As the day drew on, his heart sank at the thought of a separation from Trelawney, and immediately after the school was dismissed he hastened to his side, and grasped his hand with more than ordinary warmth.

'What's a matter?' said Frendzburgh, in response to his earnest look.

'Oh, nothing, only I wanted to be alone with you.'

'I can't spare the time just now, Willie; I'm going down to the meadow with Mount and Trotter to cut some clover for the rabbits. You can come with us, if you like.'

As, however, he wished to be alone with him, he disengaged his hand, and turned away disappointed, but had not gone more than a few steps before Frendzburgh shouted after him to know if he knew what had become of the rope he had the other day. Darting off, he returned in a few seconds with the article, that he had hidden in a hole in one of the walls, and gave it to Trelawney, who, as he and his companions hurried off, told him he would not be long away, and then disappeared over the wall. Absent longer than he probably anticipated, on his return he had not time to spare before supper was announced, and after that Willie was too much occupied in arranging his plans for the night to afford time to spend with him, or give him more than a passing sorrowful thought. He even avoided him, lest he should be betrayed into a communication that, he was satisfied, would lead to the thwarting of his purpose. But, whilst the pain at not taking leave of one more than all the rest to him was acute, he endeavoured to console himself with the reflection that they

would soon meet again, as their destiny appeared to be strangely controlled by the same hand.

'Aw say, Woolton,' said Harfagr, as they sat on the other side the Calf Garth wall after supper, planning the night's proceedings, ''at'll tha do fur summat to eat t' morn; 'at's oll aw cud chet mysen on o' ma supper. Aw were reight hungered. Tak 't, lad.' As he spoke he took Willie's cap off his head, and emptied his pocket of the broken bits of brown bread therein, being the greater portion of his meagre allowance at the evening's meal. 'Whar's your'n?' feeling Willie's pockets.

'Mine? I ate it.'

'Yo've etten 't!' exclaimed Harfagr with surprise. 'Wol, th'art a gump! ev 'at doan't cap a'. War 'at mad' tha do yon?'

'Wasn't I hungry? I'm always hungry, ain't you? Were you sick?'

At this question the other was just bursting into a loud laugh, when prudence stopped him, lest he should attract attention from the boys wandering about. Patting Willie on the back, he took up his cap, containing the remnant of his own supper, and, clapping it on his head, concluded his merriment by saying in a jesting tone, 'By jingo, mun! aw wonner yoar mither let you oot by yersen; aw ken wo'll soon ha' ye back at t' owd school.'

Not yet fully comprehending the intention, Wilton lifted his cap, and the contents came tumbling over his shoulders.

'Oad rot it!' exclaimed Harfagr, ''at mad tha do yon?' Speedily gathering up the fragments, he looked round for something to wrap them in, but, not finding anything, pulled off his coat, and tore out the last piece of lining in the sleeve, in which he carefully folded them, and then thrust it into Willie's trousers pocket, exclaiming on the completion thereof, as he grasped it on the outside, 'Thar nah, ev tha noa happen on ony hoase on t' rooad, 'at may do 'ee till 'ee get t' Lunnun toan;' which opinion may convey some idea of the extent of the geographical knowledge of the Grumbleby students, though of course it should be borne in mind that the mutual interest (omitting the student) of teachers and guardians rendered it a wise expedient that the said students should have as limited a knowledge of the geography of the country as was compatible with his finding his way from the Grumbleby dominions to the immediate neighbourhood.

A short pause followed the last utterance of Harfagr, during which each boy was revolving in his mind the probabilities and contingencies of the next few hours, to be fraught with different results to both. Whilst to one it appeared as the opening of the

door to the caged bird, to the other it seemed as though another manacle was being rivetted around his own limbs, to render *his* escape the more hopeless, and his fate the less endurable. At times, as he contemplated the loneliness that would be his on the loss of one whose singular, transparent character had obtained such an influence over him, he felt constrained, to use his own expression, 'to pail his heead agen a jaumstoan for beean sichen a fooil' as to assist in his escape. But he consoled himself by indulging in a savage delight at having it in his power to cause trouble and commotion to the hated management, the idea of which spurred him on with a dogged determination to carry it through.

Having thus pondered their plans and prospects, Harfagr at length broke silence by expressing a wonder where they would find a rope.

'What do we want with a rope?' said Willie.

'Aw doan't thenk tha'lt tew t' rake dahn throo winda withaht a rooap; t' last lod as clomb'd throo cha'mer winda gate soa mesht wi' fall, he wur all bud deead.'

'Oh, I know! there's the rope that I gave Frendzburgh to-day to tie round the clover for the rabbits; I know where I'll get it, and you can give it back to him.'

The rope was got, and hid near the entrance to the back-stairs, to be carried up with them in the dark as they retired to bed. They had scarcely done this when the summons for that purpose was resounding over the grounds, and, amid the rush and scramble up the dark, narrow stairway, there was no difficulty in conveying the rope unseen to their bed, and hiding it under the straw paillasse. In a trice the two boys were between the bed-clothes, simulating sleep, resisting all efforts of the tenants of the other beds to lie awake and talk, which had the desired effect, for soon the growing stillness, interrupted only by hard breathing and occasional shouts and starts, told that all had succumbed.

Unable to resist the mesmeric influence, his wearied mind and body yielded, and Willie fell into a disturbed slumber, in which the form of Miss Austen presented herself, seeming to gaze on him sorrowfully, and then disappeared. Presently he was on board the smack, sitting on Mr. Grumphy's knee, who was endeavouring to unclasp his hands as they held him tightly round the neck, and in the struggle he uttered a smothered cry that made Harfagr start and dig his elbows into his side, as he whispered, 'Woolton, Woolton, consarn thee, tha'lt waken all t' rooam.' Willie woke, and was rising up in the bed, when the

other pulled him down, with a 'Wisht! lig dahn, an' haud thi noise;' saying which, he crept softly from under the clothes, and approached each bed in the room to ascertain if all were sound asleep; then went to the passage and listened at the head of the stairs, then at the entrance to the next room. All was quiet, save the usual sounds, that indicated the dreamer was perchance rehearsing the play of his waking hours, or, it may be, translated to other days and scenes, was luxuriating in a shadowy supper, teased thereto by the 'bowel-raking pains of emptiness' of a stomach that even sleep could not silence, for, as the Greek proverb avers, 'It has no ears to listen, but goes on clamouring still.' Satisfied that all was right, he returned, and bid Willie rise quickly and dress, except his boots, which he was to carry in his hands. At the completion of their hurried toilet, they withdrew into the outer room or entry, which, as before stated, was unoccupied, serving as a large landing at the head of the boys' staircase.

'Whar's t' rooap?'

Willie laid down his boots to return to the bed for it, when a footstep and the faint glimmer of a light in the passage at the foot of the stairs, followed by the sound of a foot in the act of ascending, arrested their attention, and in an instant both boys were back to their room, and, throwing off their jackets, jumped into their beds and closed their eyes. They had barely time for this before the usher reached the empty room, and was crossing it with a quick step, when his foot kicked against Willie's boots. Stooping down, he picked them both up and examined them, but as any identification was out of the question, he muttered some threats of punishment against the owner, who had presumed to bring them up-stairs, and then hastened through the rooms, carelessly throwing the glare of the light on each side, to ascertain that all were in bed and asleep. On his return he descended the privileged stairs, carrying the boots with him to his own room, the shutting the door of which intimated that he had retired for the night. After listening a short time, Harfagr again directed Willie to rise, and, putting on their jackets, he took the rope from under the sacking, and re-entered the next chamber.

'Where's my shoes?' said Willie.

Harfagr searched around the room, and then, looking up at the boy, exclaimed,—

'Dang ma owd shoon, usher's nabbed 'em!' and the two looked at each other, puzzled as to what was to be done. ''At mad' tha

leave thame thur? 'At's to be dooan?' He scratched his ragged head, as, puzzled, he gazed into Willie's face; then, recollecting himself, he added, with a knowing wink, 'Yo' maun ha' shoon, an' there's no call to be ower 'tickler to-neet.' He stepped cautiously back into the bed-room, and commenced a search under the beds, and in a few seconds drew from their hiding-place a pair of boots, placed there for security, lest they should be claimed by some other from being superior to his own. They fitted as well as such usually did, but Willie made some scruple at this mode of supplying himself, which, however, his less conscientious friend promptly silenced. 'Doan't tha knaw exchange arn't noa robbery?—you've on'y swapped.'

'But is that right?' said the other.

'Right! arn't 't traidin'? Aw niver seed sich a chap.'

The window was now gently opened, and a cold raw air came rushing in that made Willie shiver. Harfagr fastened the rope to the handle of a large chest that stood immediately under the casement, and then, lowering it, looked out to ascertain its length, when, to his dismay, he discovered it reached little more than half-way. 'To ho!' said he, as he drew his head in and looked at Willie, 'yonner's a go!' Then, brightening up, 'Ne'er heed, at's noa good greetin' ower spelt melk, we mud do summat right off. Tak' off shoon agen, lad;' and, taking his hand, he led him to the stairs, which, after listening a moment, they descended. The creaking noise of the old treads caused them to pause now and then on their way. At the foot of the stairs they stumbled over the boots and shoes piled there, and again stopped to listen, but as nothing broke the silence save the heavy ticking of the old eight-day clock in the sitting-room, they groped their way on through the dark to the back door, which, not being fastened, Harfagr proceeded to open; whereat a gust of wind rushed in, from the draught occasioned by the open window up-stairs (which they had omitted to close), that caused the sash to fall with a bang. Both boys retreated to the stairs, prepared to re-ascend, but as there were no signs of any one being disturbed, Harfagr caught up his boots, that he had deposited in a place by themselves, and returned to the door, which, having put on their boots, they closed after them.

As they stepped out into the darkness, Harfagr experienced a temporary check, for the old pig-barrel a few yards before them was moving, for so the rustling sound of the dry leaves around it seemed to indicate. His first thought was of Anne Wettle, to

whom Grumbleby traditions assigned the locality of the rookery, about which she was ever and anon seen by affrighted boys on dark nights; but just then a rat, darting by them to join the rest, revealed the cause of the noise, and which, as they advanced, was increased by the sudden dispersion of the ravenous brood. Thereupon he screwed up his courage, and now, more in fear of earthly beings, the two hurried to the boundary gate, which they soon gained. As they stood on the outside and looked down the still road, Willie's heart experienced a sensation that made his pulse beat faster; he was beginning to realize, as he had not before, the grave nature of the step he was about taking. He was venturing alone, on a dark, cold night, upon a road to which he was a stranger, except that part nearest the school premises, within perhaps a mile. He might lose his way, might starve, might meet one of the kidnappers, in whose existence the whole school had such implicit faith; a dozen other things were beginning to rise before him. But just then some leaves blown by the wind came rustling behind him, and, looking back, the thought again recurred to him of being incarcerated in that horrible place, probably as long, and until he became as rude a nondescript as Mape; the thought restored his wavering purpose.

'Woolton,' said Harfagr, who had been watching him, 'at's dark, lod, bud niver feear, at's soa much t' better; tha'lt be getten a long gate afoor ony yun's afoot, soa hurry an' kep a sharp look-oot.'

'Good-bye,' said Willie, as he held out his hand, and faltering with emotion.

'Oh, gooid-bye!' said Harfagr, pretending to look down the road, to hide his own feelings.

'I'll never forget you, Mape, and I'll do what I said;—I wish you were going too, dear old fellow.' As Harfagr made no movement in response to Willie's proffered hand, the latter took hold of his, and, squeezing it tight with both hands, added, 'Don't forget me, Mape.'

''At's tha dooin', mun, 'at yoa'r noa goin'?—yoa'r losin' time. He drew his hand away and raised it to his eyes, as though shading them as he looked up the road, but in reality to brush away a tear.

Without uttering another word, Willie walked slowly away, occasionally looking back at the uncouth but true-hearted lad, the outline of whose form, leaning against the gate (where now,

as the other was out of hearing, he surrendered himself to his choking emotions), was dimly visible, until, turning the angle of the road, he was shut from his view.

'Wall, he's goan,' said the sorrowful lad, raising his head and looking down the road; then pushed the gate to re-enter the grounds, but closed it again with a shudder, as he looked inside, and returned to the middle of the road and stared down it; then, musing to himself, said, 'Poor Woolton goan!—the on'y yun aw iver cared for an' as iver loiked ma;—awm right dahn put to 't. Woy, woy,'—a choking sensation stopped his utterance, and he returned to the gate, and leaned his hands and head thereon,—'it's ommost deeath-blow to mi. Aw dedn't thenk aw'd ha' minded. Wha'll tell ma nah thame quare thengs abaht Him as deed?' This last thought suggested another,—'Deed! happen on't young 'un wor to dee on t' rooad. Awm fair brawt tul't!' and he turned to the middle of the road again.

As Willie arrived at the next turn in the road, he cast a farewell glance at Nanny Miller's cottage, the scene of so many pleasant gustatory memories, and was just rounding the opposite corner, when he caught the sound as of some one running along the road he had just left. Without a second thought, he leaped into the ditch, and was in the act of scrambling up the other side and through the hedge, when he found himself grasped by the leg and pulled forcibly back, as he uttered an involuntary shriek.

'Haud on, 'at's noa t' rooad,' exclaimed Harfagr, for it was he, still holding on to Willie, who was struggling to free himself. Recognising the voice, Willie slid down, with an effort to laugh off his fright, and thereupon Mape, in reply to his questioning, informed him that he had made up his mind to accompany him until daybreak, when he 'counted' he'd get back in time for 'all up,'—a conclusion forced on him by his cogitations at the gate. As to the result, beyond his loss of rest, which could soon be made up, idle time being the only thing of which there was a sufficiency at the Academy, if we except 'thrashing,' he was quite certain it would be the same,—punishment, severe and extreme, awaited him. As Willie's bed-fellow he would be held responsible, no other proof of a *particeps criminis* being requisite. But he had this consolation, it was not probable he would suffer alone, as in all probability, according to the Grumbleby code, the whole room would be deemed to be implicated, and have to endure the penalty of a violated law, they not having revealed the intended flagrant breach that they should have known, if

they did not. An admirable mode of reasoning, sufficiently comprehensive to ensure the castigation of the real delinquents, and at the same time to create a *oneness of feeling*, so desirable in any community whose interests are identical, but the more especially amongst those whose tender age render them so susceptible of impressions, and an education by *feeling* up to virtuous principles.

One result of such higher education was to evoke a dare-devil spirit, a recklessness as to consequences, and to effectually dissipate all minor considerations, perceptible in the prevailing axiom of it being as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb; as a consequence, very few if any lambs were to be found at the Hall. But then, was not this only another happy device for producing great physical, if not moral courage?—a self-reliant dashing manliness, fitting for the after buffetings with the world, and within the scope of the great modern essayist's meaning, that 'a modern school will undoubtedly sharpen the wits of a clever boy.' It might be objected that those institutions are not modern; then we claim that the *modern* idea is only a reproduction.

The two boys, now stimulated by companionship, were soon on the road at a 'jolly round trot,' only halting to take breath or compare notes, and express their opinion as to the probabilities of their reaching the drovers before they started again.

They had proceeded some distance, when they unexpectedly came to a division in the road, which brought them to a halt. Had it been daylight, or the moon (which had now risen) not been obscured by flying clouds, they might have discovered sufficient, either in the marks of hoofs or other indications, to guide them, but as this was not then practicable, after a short consultation it was decided to continue the one that seemed the most direct.

The proverb has it, 'Of two ills choose the least,' but ills are not roads, or the choice would have been duly made; so the counter proverb in this case would more aptly apply, 'Of ills many, the least is too great to choose any,' and so it turned out, but which must be left to the next chapter to illustrate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BIRDIE RE-CAGED.

ONE after another, as the morning dawned, the boys at Grumbleby woke up, and, after the usual banter, entered upon the ordinary exhilarating exercise of bolstering, with a zest that elicited a few cries and some exciting chases through the adjoining rooms. Presently one of them called attention to the circumstance that the lazy brats in the corner bed were sneaking under the clothes; whereat Kappa, who had just been bestowing his favours on Trotter, wrenched the bolster out of Mount's hand, and, approaching the bedside, was in the act of bringing the chaff-filled hempen case down thereon, when a couple of more rapidly delivered shots in his rear sent him sprawling on the top thereof, the assailants taking care to disappear the next moment.

'Look out! wha wur 'at?' said the irate boy, gathering himself up for a chase. 'Ev aw doan't—My!' exclaimed he, interrupting himself, and pulling off the bed-clothes, 'why, thur ain't none o' thaim here.'

Immediately further play ceased, and those in the room, throwing down their weapons, ran to the tenantless bed, and commenced a search thereunder, as well as under all the rest, and throughout the other apartments, but in the midst of which the usher was heard ascending the stairs, and each boy rushed to his bed and dived under the clothes.

'All up! all up!' exclaimed Mr. Grippem, as he passed hurriedly along, and was about to enter the next room, when his lynx eye fell on the stripped bed, and, halting, he demanded 'who threw those clothes on the ground?' Striding over thereto, he raised his cane, with the intent of applying it to the late occupants, but, not discovering them, let it fall upon the shoulders of the nearest boy. 'Where's that dunderhead Harfagr, and his bed-fellow?'

'Please, sir, I don't know.'

'Don't know, and you sleep next to him! then why don't you?' at the same time administering another blow by way of refresher, which occasioned a cry and a retreat to a safer distance. Mr. Grippem looked round the room, and made a dash at another boy, of whom he made the same inquiry, enforcing it by the same provocative to knowledge,—a proceeding that caused a very general and expeditious ensconcing of limbs in trousers and coats, without taking time to button or brace, or tuck down tails of the inner garment. 'Where were they before I came up?' demanded he, as he seized hold of another lad.

'In bed!' shrieked the boy, under the delusion that that was a safer answer than the 'not know' one.

'Then where are they?'

The 'don't know' had to come now, and of course was followed by the same treatment.

'You know, Trimmer, I see by your look;' and with that he made a grab at the lad, who was in the act of putting on his coat, but, letting it go and ducking his person, he rushed out of the room, followed by the rest, the majority of whom, not having completed their toilet, preferred to complete it on the playground or elsewhere.

Mr. Grippem thereupon made his appearance in the other rooms, going through the same proceedings with a like effect, and which occasioned a universal stampede.

On reaching the playground, Mr. Grippem, followed by Mr. Shadd, who had just learned the state of matters from some of the retreating boys, hurried to the school-room, announcing the 'all in.'

In the meantime the alarm had spread rapidly through the premises, with sundry additions, and, transmitted through the domestics and the two craftsmen, had reached the ears of Mrs. Kearas. Out of breath from the exertion and unusual speed with which she ascended the Hall stairs, she burst into the bedroom, where she had a little while previously left her liege lord in a most enjoyable snooze, undisturbed by her garrulity, as he would have been during the tedious process of dressing, but that he had turned on the other side, and drawn the clothes over his head. 'Get oop, get oop!' exclaimed Mrs. Kearas, puffing and blowing; 'they're all runnin'.' As no signs of any movement followed this announcement, it was repeated in a louder key. Some effect was produced, for the nasal sounds ceased, followed

by a long-drawn breath. It was evident, however, they were about to recommence, but were cut short by the old lady shaking him violently, and screaming in his ear, 'D'ye hear! they're runnin', they're all runnin', an' you lyin' there like an owd pig!'

'Who? What? Well, let 'em run,' said Mr. Kearas, making a vain effort to pull his eyes open and raise his head, under the delusion that it was the animal alluded to by his better half that had taken to running.

'The lods are all runnin' away,' exclaimed Mrs. Kearas in her loudest key, and shaking him again.

'Hey!' exclaimed the schoolmaster, now thoroughly aroused, and rising as speedily as so ponderous a mass was able; then, drawing off his nightcap, he looked at his wife in bewilderment, and demanded how many had gone.

'The maist o' 'em!' exclaimed Mrs. Kearas, slamming the door after her as she hastened down-stairs to learn further particulars.

Mr. Kearas, junior, had on the first alarm hastened down to the school-room, and called the roll a second time, which proceeding showed that only the two whose bed was empty were missing; and thereupon an examination, conducted in the approved mode by the aid of the infallible cane, ensued, but which elicited no information, all being ignorant of the whereabouts of the absentees, or of their previous intention to run away, which was duly reported to Mr. Kearas, senior, on his making his appearance; who thereupon was about holding a council of war, when the door opened, and a messenger from the schoolmistress announced that she had discovered a rope, tied to a trunk, hanging out of the window of a room up-stairs.

As this discovery implied remissness on the part of the usher, in not having himself detected this solution to the mode of escape, he returned himself with the messenger to ascertain the correctness thereof, and presently reappeared with the rope in question, which, it was surmised, would give some clue to the mystery. The rope was handed to Mr. Kearas for his inspection, and, after undergoing a minute examination, aided by his staff, a general shaking of heads wound up that part of a proceeding, which, judging from their looks and manner, appeared to be very conclusive; though what there was in it, it being an ordinary piece of hemp, was a matter of wonderment to the boys, who nevertheless were not the less impressed with the sagacity of the conclave.

'Lads,' said Mr. Kearas, rising from the stool.

'Silence!' shouted Mr. Grippem.

'Silence!' echoed the shadow.

Whack went the official fasces on the lid of the desk with extra force, the usher thereto moved by the stigma he considered resting on him from his oversight of the rope.

Mr. Kearas, who had not yet recovered the effect of Mrs. Kearas' abrupt interference with his morning's after-snooze, started, and exhibited strong symptoms of nervousness.

'Don't, Mr. Grippem! don't, I beg, sir,' expostulated Mr. Kearas; 'it unhinges me.' The usher withdrew a few steps, and the schoolmaster resumed. 'Lads,—bless me! you've driven out of my head what I was about saying.'

The usher looked crestfallen at this additional reproof.

'Boys, this morning as I lay,—that is, as I laid a-thinking in my'—he hesitated, and looked round again with a frown, in. tended for Mr. Grippem, but as he had retired to his desk, Mr-Shadd had the satisfaction of enjoying the benign expression as his substitute. 'Well, it don't matter where I was a-layin', but I was, and I was all of a sudden roused—*a*roused, I should say—by the dulcimer tones of one dear to you all,—roused—*a*roused, I mean;—Mr. Grippem,' again looking round on the substitutionary shadow, 'don't do that again, I beg,—aroused by her sobs, or something else, at the loss of two dear boys, as it now turns out,—of—of—what's their names?' which in his confusion he had omitted to ascertain.

'Harfagr and Wilton,' said Mr. Grippem, stepping forward, under the hope of reinstating himself in Mr. Kearas' good graces.

'Eh!' ejaculated the schoolmaster, with increased trepidation, that caused Mr. Grippem once more to retreat, but this time unsuccessfully, for, turning on his heels, his eyes still rivetted on him, the schoolmaster exclaimed in an angry tone, 'Wilton! the young lad I brought down last half?'

'Yes, sir,' responded Mr. Kearas, junior.

'And Hardfag!' chimed in Mr. Shadd.

'Hang Hardfag!' exclaimed the schoolmaster. 'But do you say—do you mean to say, Mr. Grippem, you've let that boy Wilton go?' Without waiting for a reply, he took hold of the shadow,—who thereupon gave himself up as a gone case,—and, steadying himself thereby as he let himself down from the platform, but in which the two had nearly capsized, he hobbled off

and out of the school, followed by his son, who had become by this time duly impressed with the gravity of the case.

As soon as Mr. Grippem conceived the two had reached the house, he desired the boys to remain in the school-room until summoned to breakfast, and, accompanied by his junior, left the school also.

By Mr. Kearas' direction, no time was lost in putting a horse into the gig, in which himself and the usher were to proceed in one direction, whilst his son and one of the men, on two saddled horses, were to pursue another. After swallowing a hasty meal, all was declared in readiness for the start.

Left to the care of Mr. Shadd, the boys as hastily disposed of their scant breakfast, and hurried out to the playground. As no school would be held that day, they were free to roam about within bounds. The interest taken in the event was too great to allow time or consideration for any personal matter, and throughout the grounds might be seen groups discussing the eventful occurrence in lower or higher tones, with greater or less animation, according to the temperament of those so engaged, or the view taken, but all, with rare exceptions, prognosticating a successful 'run,' prompted thereto by their wishes.

Amongst the few who augured badly were Aslem and Trelawney, both, however, influenced by different reasons. To the former it was evidently a disappointment: the prey might possibly yet escape from his toils, and he therefore persistently refused to coincide with any jubilant boy who took a favourable view, endeavouring to persuade him into his own way of thinking.

To Frendzburgh it presented itself in an altogether distressing light. In the first place, he reproached himself for not having more decidedly discountenanced all allusion to such escapades, although he had never entertained the thought that Willie himself seriously meditated such a step; and, in the next place, he reflected on his shortsightedness in not at once comprehending that there was something on Willie's mind, when on the previous evening he had taken his hand and expressed a wish to be alone with him, which he now had no doubt had reference to his intended flight. The idea that a boy so young and inexperienced could ever reach London, he believed to be utterly fallacious. But even if he did, the little he had learned of his history convinced him he would be sent back, and the school lictors, thus left to an undisputed control, would deal more harshly

with him than they would on his capture, in which latter case they would labour under the illusion that his success *might* have eventuated not only in depriving them of the pecuniary benefit, but have otherwise damaged the institution. With this impression, and the possibility of his attempting it again if driven thereto, they would probably resort to a milder treatment in order to win him over to submission. Upon the boys, too, it would have a good effect, their sympathies being always on the side of pluck.

The waif Harfagr did not otherwise come into the account, than that the two boys above alluded to, for the foregoing reasons, felt indignant at his complicity, satisfied that without it Willie would have not been likely to make the attempt.

Withdrawing from intercourse with the rest of the scholars, and buried in these thoughts, Frendzburgh strayed mechanically across the grounds to the gate, through which he passed a few paces to the corner looking on to the green, when his attention was attracted to the cavalcade crossing it.

Seated in the gig was the senior master, the usher by his side, driving a fine spirited animal, familiarly known to the boys as 'young Fan,' and whose trotting abilities were first-rate; riding behind the vehicle were the younger Kearas, mounted on the dam of the gig horse, an equally popular animal, and known as 'old Fan;' whilst by his side was Tommy Kaily, astride of an old sorrel gelding, on which he appeared to have anything but a comfortable seat, for when his Bucephalus got into a canter, had it not been for the adaptive style of his legs, it is very doubtful if he would have maintained his place. Disdaining, however, the artificial assistance of stirrups, his accommodating pins tenaciously adhered to the animal's flanks, whilst the stirrup-irons, swinging as he went, occasionally operated as a spur to the animal's speed.

Arrived at the end of the common, they separated, the gig taking the road passing Nanny's cottage, the horsemen turning in the opposite direction.

Engaged in watching their proceedings, Frendzburgh had not noticed that Aslem had also come up from the road behind him, and, seated on a stone, been similarly employed. On the disappearance of the two detachments, he turned towards Frendzburgh, and in a half-jeering tone said, 'Well, what d'ye say to that?—what think ye of petty now?'

'If by petty you mean Wilton,' said the other, looking at him

with a curl on his lip, 'as I know you do, I can only say I think rather more of him than I did.'

'Do 'ee? You don't think he'll get clear now?'

'Probably not, for various reasons. Not much chance even for you or me. But be that as it may, I think he's a plucky young fellow, and bids fair, at no distant day, to make others think so too;' laying a slight emphasis on others.

'Phew!—don't now—don't crow too soon; may be the speerut's a lettle too high, an' 's all runnin' over at once, an' 'll leave nowt but froth a'time it's done.'

'Time will show,' said Frendzburgh, who himself had not much faith in his prognostication in the frail boy's behalf; and, turning on his heel, as he re-entered the playground, followed by Aslem, added, 'One thing's plain, he's got the blood of a gentleman in his veins;' and again he laid emphasis on his words.

'Don't brag; bastard blood's rayther mixt, as the young colt 'll be teached afore long, when his breeding's proved by his breaking-in.'

'Perhaps it's the would-be breaker-in that will be taught when the colt rears.'

Something more was added by Aslem, but not loud enough to reach the other, who was taking a different route. It was not intended he should hear it, being an aside for the express relief of the speaker's superabundant wrathful overflow. But, leaving the school to their own reflections and performances on this epoch day, we must return to the occasion of all this commotion.

The breeze that had greeted them at the commencement of their flight had, during their progress, freshened into a strong north-easterly wind, but, being more in their backs, it had rather aided than impeded their course. Quickened by the apprehension of pursuit, they had pressed on during the entire night. The day was now breaking, and they found themselves on the verge of a lonely moor, bounded only by the horizon, a little above which was a grey plane, edged with a dark broad stripe, gradually toning down to a less deepened line of watery blue and white. A thin mist was lazily rising in some portions of the moor, whose purple and violet heaths and bracken ferns of green had faded or mellowed into a brownish autumn colour. Save here and there a solitary grouse, and the occasional cry of the departing pe-wit, or the hum of a bee still endeavouring to

extract a sweet from some decaying flower, no other sign of life was perceptible. As they struck into a sheep-path that appeared to lead through the centre of the moor, they became impressed with the thought that they had either taken the wrong road, or, in the darkness, subsequently missed their way, and thereupon came to a halt, and, throwing themselves down by the side of a mound, consulted whether to return in search of the road, or continue along the path they were on. Whilst thus undecided, and resting their tired limbs, they were attracted by the barking of a sheep-dog at some distance, but which, as they listened, became fainter, and was soon lost.

'Mebbe yon's the droovers,' said Mape; 'let's tak' cross t' moor, an' then tha'll be oll right, an' aw'll be getten back hooam!' With that, after an effort to raise his jaded body, he stood up, and crawled to the top of the mound and looked round, then returned to assist Willie, who had been vainly endeavouring to get upon his stiffened limbs. After one or two efforts he had all but succeeded, when, their hands relaxing their hold of each other, Willie fell back and Harfagr on the top of him. 'Dang 't!' exclaimed the latter, as he regained a sitting posture, ''at's ailin' un?' then, pulling the other into the same position, they sat a few minutes looking dolefully into each other's face, until, overcome by the drollery of their feelings, they gave way to a burst of laughter that terminated in prostrating them once more at full length on the ground. Having exhausted their merriment, they lay still for a time, when Harfagr, with a determined effort, dragged himself up, and took another survey of the surroundings. 'Coom, Wilton, gie us yer haand; wur mun be goin'. Nah then, pool!' and he succeeded in placing the boy on his feet. 'Haud mi haand, an' step oot.' With that he commenced dragging him along, but had not proceeded a dozen yards, before, unable to raise his blistered feet, Willie tripped and fell over the stubby heather, and exclaimed in a despairing tone,—

'Oh, Mape, I can't go any further just yet!—let me rest a bit; I'm so tired.'

'Wal, set tha oop and tak' a bite.' Whereupon Mape thrust his hand into the boy's pocket, and drew out the coat-sleeve lining, but which came out minus the contents. 'Thare's pudden clout, but whar's pudden?' Diving his hand in again, he pulled out a handful of crumbs, 'Hay, lod, tha'st mesht a' thi jock; bud nivver moind, haud thi neivs.'

'No,' replied Willie, as he rested his hands on the ground to support his body, 'I'm not hungry.'

'Noa hungry! yer mun be 'at. Open tha 'tater trap!' saying which, he held back Willie's head with one hand, whilst with the other he held the crumbs to his mouth, awaiting its opening to empty them therein.

'I can't,' remonstrated the lad, 'it would make me sick. I'm thirsty; eat it yourself.'

'Ate 't mysen?' said Harfagr, returning the crumbled bread to Willie's pocket; 'noa aw won't, tha'lt want 't bine bi.' Thereupon, rising, he gazed around as though in search of water, then looked at Willie, whose forlorn appearance caused him to scratch his towzy head, and in as lively a tone as he could assume, throwing himself down by his side, he endeavoured to cheer him by the expectation of soon falling in with the drovers, who travelled slowly with their charge, that required frequent stoppages for pasture and water. Then a new idea struck him, and he insisted on carrying him on his back; but in the effort to get him thereon, the dead weight of the boy falling on him gave a sudden impetus that upset Harfagr's gravity, and, pitching him forward, sent Willie head foremost into the scrub beyond, to the disturbance of a few twilight moths. Gathering himself up as well as he could, Harfagr set to work tugging at Wilton, and replaced him finally on his legs, which he had nearly lost again through both yielding to a fresh burst of laughter.

'Nah try an' doan't 'ee coom wi' sich a dud. Stooping down, he managed to get him on his back, his arms hanging languidly over his shoulders. Scarcely able to drag one foot after the other with this dead weight upon him, Harfagr's zig-zag course foretold the end. Scarcely had he got twenty paces before he stumbled over a tuft of heath, and both were measuring their lengths along the path. This time there was no disposition to merriment, for, besides scraping their skin and bruising themselves, they were becoming convinced that they were unable to continue their journey, at least until they had recruited their strength.

Without uttering a word, or disturbing his prostrate friend, Mape rose and staggered to a hillock close by, and climbed to the top, which he had no sooner gained than he uttered a cry of delight, and shouted to Willie that the road was not far off. The announcement infused a new energy into the lad, who raised himself on his hands and knees, and crawled over to the

eminence where Mape stood, waving his hat, and by his help rose to his feet, and shared his joy in the discovery. After enjoying the sight sufficiently long, they agreed to lie down and rest, after which Harfagr informed him that he would see him a little way on the road and then leave him. The night's experience, with the terrible lassitude now upon him, had, however, been sufficient to cause a doubt in Willie's mind whether he could pursue his course alone, and with a troubled look he inquired, 'How would he get along without him?'—an inquiry that seemed equally to trouble the other, in whose mind some misgiving had already entered of the possibility of Wilton's holding out, even with his assistance. Watching the expression of his face, the weary boy drew closer to the rough lad, and, after taking off his heavy shoes, the edges of which had chafed under his ankles until they bled, to cool his blistered feet, he drew closer to him, and leaned his beating, aching head against the other's side. Mape appeared to be revolving the serious situation in which he was placed, unable to arrive at any decision. At one time he had made up his mind to accompany him and see the issue; at another, the thought that he had nowhere to go, and the improbability that Willie's friends would shelter him, made him hesitate. Presently the heavy breathing of the boy intimated that, overcome by weariness, he had fallen asleep; so, gently laying him down on the sloping hill, he threw himself by his side, and in another minute or two was as sound asleep as the other.

They had slept long, the sun being now at the zenith, when they were woke by a dog, who was standing at the top of the mound, and barking at them. Fully impressed with the belief that they were in the neighbourhood of the drovers, they rubbed their eyes and sat up, whereat the animal ran off, still barking. As they attempted to rise, though partially refreshed, they found their limbs so stiff, as well as numbed by the cold wind, from the severity of which, however, the little hill had in a degree sheltered them, that they ascended on their hands and knees. By a little exertion Harfagr rose, and, following the dog with his eyes, as he made off through the brush, in the hope of discovering the drovers or their cattle in that direction, his back became partly turned towards the road, at the moment that a vehicle was emerging from the shelter of the hedge, that terminated as the road opened on to the moor, alongside of which it ran for a space. Attracted by the sound of the carriage wheels,

the two boys turned their eyes in the direction whence it proceeded, and in terror Harfagr exclaimed, 'Be gow! ev yon arn't t'owd measter and Grippy!'

The first impulse was to dodge down and hide behind the mound, but, perceiving they were discovered, the next was to run for it. Before them was the far-stretching moor, without bush, tree, or other interposing obstacle to cover their retreat, but, urged by the instinct of self-preservation, Harfagr darted off, shouting to Willie to follow. His fears seemed to have renewed his strength, and the ungainly lad, with astonishing celerity, rapidly increased the distance between the starting-point and himself. Not so Willie; he was done out, and, overcome by fright, he sat transfixed to the spot, awaiting the approach of his pursuers, who had descended from the gig, and Mr. Grippem, in advance of the schoolmaster, made him an unresisting captive.

Dragging him towards the carriage, the usher commenced a torrent of abuse, which he was about to follow up with a like quantity of cuffs and kicks, but that the schoolmaster, hobbling up, prevented, and ordered him to be lifted into the gig, too rejoiced at the issue to be otherwise than in high spirits.

'Yoicks! yoicks!' shouted the schoolmaster, as, looking round after having seated himself by the side of his captive, he discovered the usher in full cry after Harfagr. 'Coom back, ye nonticake! let him run, let him run; he'll coom home to roost, I'll warrant, sooner than he's wanted.'

It was evident Mr. Kearas understood too well the relation in which poor Mape stood to the school, and the superior attractions that place had for that class of boys, and therefore saw no sport in the chase of game that would be easier trapped in his lair.

It was not without some regret, however, that Mr. Grippem found himself baulked of so inviting an opportunity of disposing of a large accumulation of bile, well aware that no restraint would have been imposed on him in administering as full a penalty as he chose on such a delinquent, and so returned to the carriage in additional ill-humour.

If Mr. Kearas, as he drove towards home, was calling to mind the old saw of John Heywood, 'Better one byrde in the hand, than two in the woode,' he would certainly, in its application to poor Harfagr, see some wisdom in the added line, deeming *his* sojourn in the wood 'better for byrder, though for byrde not so good;' and so the overflow of spirits at the recapture of only the

'one in hand' seemed to imply, and it accordingly drew forth such an amount of jocularity from the naturally good-tempered old gentleman, that even Mr. Grippem was constrained to relax.

As the day wore on, the excitement at the Hall seemed to intensify rather than abate. Groups of boys were gathered along the wall that separated the Calf Garth from the road, and even along the road itself; whilst others climbed into the trees, to the very top boughs, to obtain the earliest intimation of the result of the pursuit. But little interest was manifested in the direction taken by the junior master, it being concluded that Harfagr was too old a bird to be caught 'running' into nets, so well spread along what was the high road of travel.

The evening was drawing in, when suddenly a cry from one of the boys in the trees caused a rush thereto, and a clamorous outcry to know what he saw. Others, in their eagerness, helped one another to climb up the trunk to the same outlook, or hastened to the neighbouring trees for the same purpose.

'Yon's Kusscat an' Langstummuck running with all their might round the corner!' again shouted the boy, referring to two boys thus nicknamed; and then, venturing on the topmost limb, he shouted excitedly, 'Be gow! there's t'owd measter driving down the fur road!' 'Who's wi' him?'—'Have they got 'em?'—'Are they alone?' was now resounding from every hand. 'Oh, I see them!' cried another from another tree. 'Who is it?'—'What d'ye see?'—'Can't ye speak,—say!' And now those on the ground leaped on to the wall, knocking one another off in their scramble for an eligible place for the first sight. 'O crikey, ev they an't got 'em!'—'Noa!'—'Yes!—they're in the middle, 'tween Karrass an' Grippem.'—'Noa, nah, thur's on'y yun, it's the young un.'—'Ah, aw knaw'd Hardfag 'ud gie 'em the slip.'—'Aw say, you Trotter, you pull my leg again, an' see whar you'll get.'

By this time the gig had turned Nanny Miller's corner, and a general descent from walls and trees ensued, the majority taking their stand behind the enclosure, whilst others hastened to the gate, and, under the impression that the schoolmaster would drive into the playground, held it wide open. As they drove along the road, the boys crowded up; but instead of turning into the grounds, they passed on to the other end, where Jurdy awaited their arrival, the news of their approach having reached the house, and driving through the gate they disappeared.

'O my!' exclaimed the boys as they let the gate slam, 'an't

it a pity!'—'Warn't he a fool to be catched?'—'See if they'd catch me!' A host of similar expressions evidenced the want of sympathy with the boy that allowed himself to be caught; whilst many were the commendatory utterances in regard to Harfagr, who, it was assumed, had got clear.

Supper was dispensed by Shaddy alone, who had a more easy time of it than he would otherwise have had, the boys being too much occupied with the day's adventure to afford time to bother him, or in any otherwise take advantage thereof, except that one here and there, on retiring from the supper seats, having to pass the bread-basket, took the opportunity thereby afforded to help themselves to an extra slice, it being well understood that the less keen shadow had not the additional eyes in his head that his lynx-eyed senior was asserted to possess.

Subsequent to his little spar with Aslem, Frendzburgh had, during the most of the day, been alone, revolving in his mind the probable issue of the unfortunate occurrence, as he considered it, that had so disturbed the ordinary routine, always arriving at one resolve,—to make Harfagr pay bitterly for his supposed guilty complicity as the instigator and planner of the affair, taking advantage of Willie's simplicity and ignorance to involve him in a most serious scrape. The return of Willie alone had, however, interfered with this intention, besides rendering the matter more inexplicable.

The day following passed without any solution of the mystery that hung over the event, no one being able to communicate with the returned captive, and the usher being in too ferocious a mood to even converse on the subject with his deputy, who stood too much in awe of him to venture to ask information at such a season.

The afternoon school, after being unusually prolonged, and the boys subjected to an extra amount of caning, cuffing, and sentences to further punishments, was at length dismissed. Wandering towards the end of the rookery after supper, still indulging in surmises as to the late adventure, Frendzburgh's attention was attracted by a head peering over the wall on the plantation side, but which, as he approached, immediately bobbed down, not, however, before it had been identified, and, leaping to the other side, before Harfagr had time to retreat, Trelawney had collared him, and was joined by two boys who had witnessed his proceedings.

'Chuck him over!' cried one.

'Wait a bit,' said Trelawney, pushing them off as they were in the act of taking hold of him, and then planted Harfagr against a tree, still retaining his hold, lest he should attempt to escape.

'Now, what have you to say for yourself? Tell the truth, or I'll lick you till I can't stand over you!'

With difficulty restraining himself from striking him, he shook the bewildered lad, and knocked his head against the trunk of the tree; a swimming sensation ensued, his brown face turned deadly pale, a long-drawn, jerky respiration followed, and he sank to the earth.

'Pitch into him!' exclaimed one of the boys, as he raised his hand to strike; 'we'll have no shamming here.'

'Noa, aw'll tell tha: tak' hold on his heels, and aw'll tak' his heead, and we'll ding him over the wall, an' carry 'm dahn t schooil.'

Touched by the boy's appearance, Trelawney bid the two desist, and, kneeling down by his side, saw that he had swooned. 'Mape,' said he, experiencing some relentings, 'Mape, lad, what's a matter?' and then he shook him.

'Give him a poke,' said one of the boys, at the same time administering a kick with his heavy clogs.

'Hold off now, or I'll poke you,' said Trelawney. 'Don't you see there's something wrong with him?'

'Wrong? Doan't tug an' tew wi' 'im, but make 'im weg; he's on'y shamming.'

'Run down to the beck, and bring some water, quick!' said Trelawney; but observing that neither stirred, he looked at the broad-spoken one, and in a commanding tone sent him off, grumbling, to comply with his request.

Raising Harfagr's head, he placed his own cloth cap there under, and brushed his long straggling hair off his face, and continued watching him until the return of the boy with the water, when he commenced drenching his face, and endeavoured to pour some through his clenched teeth into his mouth, but without any apparent effect.

'He's deead,' said the broad-spoken boy. 'There'll be a berrien' an' white girdle-cake;' and he rubbed his hands at the prospect, the white girdle-cake being a special article, generally allowed in lieu of brown bread at breakfast and tea on such occasions. 'T' owd measter woan't greet for ye, poa lod.'

'He's awful-lookin', ain't he?' said the other. 'Giv' me the tin an' I'll go for more water.'

'No; take his hands, both of you, and rub them, and I'll rub his chest.' Thereupon the three commenced a friction that would have soon excoriated poor Harfagr, had his skin been less tough.

Tired out by their fruitless efforts, one of the boys suggested to shake him, suiting the action to the word, but with no better effect than the chafing. A consultation thereupon took place as to the next course, when it was decided to lift him over the wall and carry him down to the school. Presently, placed on the back of one, whilst Frendzburgh and the other held him by the arms, they conveyed him thereto, escorted by such stragglers as they met on their way.

Leaving the two boys to afford such information to the repeated inquiries as they might claim to be able to afford, Frendzburgh tried one or two other expedients to restore the prostrated Harfagr, but without success, which revived the before-mentioned anticipations of the broad-spoken boy respecting the prospective girdle-cake, an idea that occasioned the majority to regard Trelawney's efforts with less favour than they otherwise would, except when resorting to the rolling process, which, being looked upon as great fun, and more likely to eject any remaining vitality than a milder treatment, soon obtained a host of volunteers to assist in. Happily, however, for the subject experimented upon, Frendzburgh at this phase decided to cease further operations, and, as a consequence, the poor bruised body of Harfagr, that would have soon been reduced to a pulp had it continued, began after a time, by twitchings, contractings, and sundry other tokens, to betray signs rather tending to excite fears with regard to the girdle-cake, although some of the more knowing ones asserted these were only premonitory, and always occurred before giving the last kick,—a statement that revived the hopes of the girdlers, the more especially as in the midst of these speculations poor Mape commenced kicking in reality, which of course sent the aforementioned students into an ecstasy, and, without awaiting any further diagnosis of his case from the learned student who had thus revived their hopes, a struggle ensued to witness how it was done. To the disgust, however, of one and all, after indulging to excess in this predicted finishing stroke, in which the desk that he had been laid on was the only sufferer, just as

he should have ceased to kick and live, he opened his eyes, swung out his arms, and rose to a sitting posture, and stared wildly around. A general retrograde movement took place, in which more than one went tumbling over another, calling forth some special invocation not necessary to repeat in this place. Standing at a respectful distance, they watched the symptoms that, according to the aforesaid dictum, should have terminated in relieving poor Mape of any further interest in a world that appeared but little interested in him.

'There they are! there they are!' said Mape in a faint voice, his eyes gleaming wildly, and raising his hand and pointing in the direction of a couple of boys, who thereupon slunk behind the rest. 'See! see!—run! run!' And he shrieked, 'Run hard! they're on tha! Theer they coom! Brain 'em! brain em!' and he made a spasmodic effort to clutch something, that caused him to roll off the desk, and put the boys to a precipitate flight.

The feeble light emitted by the solitary candle stuck against the wall caused his pantomimic action, and wild look and words, to assume a weird-like character; and in their fright some made for the door, and were in the act of rushing out pell-mell, when they encountered Messrs. Grippem and Shadd, who had come down to the room to call the roll and order all to bed.

The sudden apparition of these worthies at such a moment elicited a cry of terror that was re-echoed by their affrighted schoolmates, and caused the two ushers to retreat a few paces in alarm, under the impression that the school were in open rebellion; but, recovering himself, Mr. Grippem stalked in, driving the alarmed boys before him, closely followed by his shadow. The hush that ensued enabled him to make inquiries as to the cause of this strange commotion, at the same time looking cautiously round, lest any lurking danger awaited him. As he did so, his searching glance fell upon the prostrate Harfagr. Instantly recognising the unfortunate culprit, he sprang forward; a grim smile lighted up his bronzed, sardonic features as he stooped down to look closer into his face. At that instant, however, moved by the same impulse as before, Harfagr rose to a sitting posture, and their countenances almost came into collision; his eyes glaring as they met those of the usher, he fairly howled, and then threw his arms around his legs as he was in the act of retreating.

Taken completely off his guard by so unusual a proceeding,

never during his prolonged stay at Grumbleby having been the subject of an embrace, he shouted to Shaddy to pull him off, making desperate efforts to disengage himself, but which he was further prevented doing, as the dazed boy now held him convulsively in his grasp, both arms and legs twisted around his body, thus effectually preventing his making use of his hands.

'Run! run!' shrieked the boy.

'Pull him off!' shouted the terrified usher.

'Aw'll stick to 'm whiles tha goas!' still screamed the lad, holding on with supernatural strength.

'Pull him off!' reiterated Mr. Grippem, appealing more directly to Mr. Shadd, who, assisted by Aslem, now came to his rescue and by their united efforts, succeeded in detaching his arms and legs from their vice-like grip, and deposited Harfagr on the form.

Wiping his face, on which the perspiration stood in large drops, and glaring savagely at the boy, the usher strode over to his desk, whence he took out the birch and cane, and returned, tucking up his sleeves. Looking round, he singled out four of the larger boys, and, as well as his choked utterance would allow, desired them to lay him across the desk and denude him, preparatory to the flogging he was about to inflict on him most unmercifully. At this juncture, Frendzburgh, slightly agitated, stepped out of the crowd, and ventured to suggest that the usher should defer further proceedings until the boy, who was not in his proper senses, should be in a more fit state to undergo chastisement. The usher eyed him for a moment, his countenance livid with rage, then pushed him aside, and struck one of the boys who, awaiting the issue of this appeal, had hesitated to take Harfagr's arm, and whereat, expecting similar treatment, the other three retreated to a distance.

'Come back!' roared the usher. 'Over with him directly, or I'll flog the whole of ye.'

'Not to-night, Mr. Grippem,' again remonstrated Frendzburgh, in as respectful a tone as he could under his disturbed state of feeling, resolved, since he had ventured to intercede, not to desist without a further effort,—'not to-night. Leave him, sir, until to-morrow, and he'll be the better able to bear it.'

Turning upon him, he raised his rod as though about to strike, at which Trelawney moved a little further off.

'Stand back!' screamed the ferocious man, shaking in every limb. 'Dare to utter another word, and I'll give you what I

am about to give that misbegotten scamp. Mr. Shadd, where are you? Here, help these boys to get that weasened profligate across the desk, and down with his clothes.'

Mr. Shadd and the four boys approached, and, taking hold of Harfagr, were about to execute the usher's order, when Frendzburgh called out, 'It'll kill him!'

'I'll kill *you!*' yelled the teacher, making a blow at him, but which the distance at which he stood enabled him to avoid. 'Make haste,' said he, turning to his junior and his assistants, who thereupon, dreading the effect of his wrath on themselves, seized their victim by the arms and legs, and were in the act of dragging him across the desk, when a disguised voice cried out, 'Douse the glim!'—a well-known expedient in time of trouble; and in a trice an old hat, snatched from the head of a boy in the vicinity of Trelawney, flew to the other side of the room, and knocked the candle down, and they were in the dark.

'Who did that?' vociferated the baffled usher,—'who did that, I say? speak, or I'll flog every boy in the school.' A breathless silence ensued; then, repeating the question, he called out, 'Aslem, who put that light out?' There was a pause. 'Aslem, where are you?'

'Here, sir,' responded the boy.

'Who put that light out? tell directly, or I'll punish *you.*'

'I think it were Trelawney,' replied the boy, as though giving the information with reluctance.

'You'd best keep your thoughts to yourself!' exclaimed Frendzburgh.

'Oh, Trelawney, was it? Hum! Mr. Trelawney, eh! Oh, ah, Mr. Trelawney!' Mr. Grippem was chewing the cud of his resentment. 'Very well, very well, very good, Mr. Trelawney. Well, Mr. Trelawney, you and I will come to a settlement. I've a long score against you, and to-morrow, by heavens! I'll wipe it off, so prepare yourself.'

By this time, Mr. Shadd, who had been groping on the floor for the candle, reported it was all mashed under their feet, whereupon, with an effort to appear calm, the usher exclaimed, 'No consequence, it'll be light all day to-morrow;' and then, ordering Mr. Shadd to follow, the two worthies, after knocking their shins against forms, strangely out of their places and obstructing their passage, groped their way out, and returned to the house, but which they did not reach before their ears caught the sound of yells and shouts, mingled with the battering

of desks and forms, that intimated the boys were celebrating their temporary triumph, but which Mr. Grippem vowed to himself should cost them dear.

Shortly after, Mr. Kearas, junior, lantern in hand, entered the juvenile Babel, and in stentorian tones, that eventually stilled the tempest, ordered all to bed. During the *melée* that ensued, Frendzburgh managed, with the assistance of Mount and Trotter, to smuggle Harfagr to his own bed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ROD TAKEN OUT OF PICKLE.

HALF-AN-HOUR later than usual the next morning, Mr. Shadd walked through the bed-rooms, mildly calling on the boys to rise, reminding them that it was late. At any other time, this duty being performed by another than the usher-in-chief would have called forth animadversion, but, under the present aspect of affairs, it was too ominous not to be regarded with foreboding. With such impression, Mr. Shadd had less trouble than he otherwise could have had in executing this part of Mr. Grippem's duty; nothing further transpiring to disturb his performance thereof than a few grimaces and antics, that indicated the appreciation of his authority, and the pranks of one or two of the more irrepressible, who stole softly behind him, and testified their regard for his person by making special demonstrations with their fists and bare feet; but of course, not being aware thereof, he was unable, had he been so disposed, to reciprocate such attention. As a significant token, however, that a shadow had fallen upon them, beyond a faint smile, these capers failed to incite the emulation they would have done on other mornings, and soon each boy disappeared, quietly wending his way to the school-room, where, gathered in knots, they listened to some bigger, and of course on that account wiser, lad, who was drawing a graphic outline of the coming events, only interrupted in his sage conceptions by the added darker filling in of the sketch by some equally brilliant genius.

The impression, had any stranger looked in on them that morning, would have been favourable to their unity. 'Misery,' it is said, 'likes company;' it makes friends, too, and so for the nonce all discord, finding expression in kicks, cuffs, or even angry words, had ceased.

The fact of Mr. Shadd presiding at the morning's meal did

not tend to abate the oppression that prevailed, but rather augmented it. In his happiest mood Mr. Grippem had never been able to command such order. As on the previous occasion, when presiding at the supper table, not a boy required his ears to be boxed; and as a still more remarkable feature in this exceptional state of things, it may be added there was not a 'young 'un' but that morning enjoyed the gratifying privilege of drinking all his own milk-and-water, the big boy next to him being too absorbed in the attempt to solve the mystery that hung over them to attend thereto, whilst the boys to whom the heaps of crumbs were allotted, were content to forego the dexterous transfer thereof for their neighbour's whole slice.

'Where's Hardfag?' whispered the boy who usually sat next him at table.

'I dunno,' replied the questioned lad.

At that moment Milly appeared at the door and beckoned to Mr. Shadd, and, after communicating with her, the latter approached the table, and, gathering up the allotted bread and milk, conveyed Mape's breakfast to her. But, all eyes turned that way, it was noticed that she refused to receive the piece of bread, and that Mr. Shadd, after some remonstrance, returned to the basket, and, adding thereto a piece of the same size, she went off satisfied,—a proceeding that caused more than one boy to shake his head and affirm that 'Mill war a daycent lass.'

The breakfast was soon over, its quantity and no second help at all times making it no difficult matter to dispose thereof; and, as they passed to the playground or school-room, a very general inquiry as to what had become of Harfagr took place, when it transpired that, though they knew he went to bed, no one remembered seeing him get out thereof or dress himself. As to Willie Wilton, the parlour boarders, who always breakfasted together at a side-table in the same room, were equally posed at his non-appearance, but subsequently learned that he had breakfasted with the master and mistress.

It was not long before the school had resolved itself into several committees of inquiry into the impenetrable state of matters, and, as before their meal, were essaying to puzzle out the portents of what all agreed was a coming 'fearfu'' storm. Frendzburgh, of course, had made up his mind that he was to bear no unimportant part in the *dénouement*, whatever it might be, and, unable to bear the tantalizing delay, resolved on making an effort to obtain some clue to the day's programme.

With this intention he bent his way to the kitchen, under pretence of consulting the master tailor in reference to some needed repairs. He was soon taken into the confidence of Tommy, with whom he had always been a favourite, and, there being no one in the kitchen besides themselves and Jurdy, Tommy intimated to him that these were piping times, and that just now 'the two measters, t' owd woman, and two ushers, were in earnest consultation, and that more than once, before the door was slammed to, loud and angry tones were heard, as though in dispute, the usher's voice above the rest, and, from what he could make out, all were down on the old man, who appeared to be holding out against the rest.' He also intimated that he thought two or three boys had been privately sent for.

'Where's Harfagr?' demanded Frendzburgh.

'Fassened in t' cellar.'

'In the cellar? let me speak to him;' and without waiting a reply he crossed over to the door leading thereto, when Tommy called him back, telling him some one was coming. Returning to the tailor's side, he pulled off his coat and pointed out a hole that required patching. Voices were now heard proceeding from the room, the door of which had been opened, and, hastily putting on his coat, Trelawney hurried off.

About half-an-hour afterwards the 'all in' was called, and Mr. Kearas, junior, accompanied by Mr. Grippem, and followed by Shadd, Tommy, and Jurdy, made his appearance in the schoolroom, where an unusual silence prevailed. 'Call the roll,' exclaimed Mr. Kearas in a peremptory tone. Every boy responded except Wilton and Harfagr. At the completion thereof, Tommy was called to the front, and, in obedience to instructions, left the room, and after a short absence returned, leading in Harfagr and Wilton.

An uneasy movement took place amongst the boys, all eager to get a view of their distinguished comrades as they moved on to the seat of justice, and which Mr. Kearas' demand for quiet could not repress.

Willie looked paler and was a little lame, but better than might have been anticipated, accounted for by his not having, like his fellow-culprit, to walk back, and that since his return he had been well cared for, the actuating cause thereto being a wholesome fear lest his exhausted frame should give in, which would have militated against the interests of the school in more ways than one. The other, having no such influential cause to commend him

to the sympathy of his jailors, gave evidence of having suffered much, both from the strain on his debilitated body and the excitement of his brain, that had never before been called to exert and display its energy beyond the ordinary, and, as may be supposed, his subsequent treatment had not tended to ameliorate his condition.

After a few preliminaries, Mr. Kearas, junior, commenced an address in which, according to wont, he expatiated on the superlative advantages enjoyed by the inmates of Grumbleby, whom he congratulated on their good fortune in not having been consigned to any of the miserable imitations of this celebrated institution. At the conclusion whereof he went into a discursive rhapsody on the transcendent virtues and amiabilities of his beloved parents, which he wound up by expressing a fear that they were not half appreciated by that limited number to whom the privilege of admission had been accorded (the said limit being regulated by the supply); at which thought Mr. Minas appeared considerably affected, and, after applying his handkerchief to his eyes and nose, became so moved by the supposed insensibility, that he proceeded in an indignant manner to repudiate such heartless conduct, and to portray in dark colours the low, hopeless condition of any boy who, once in the enjoyment of those unspeakable blessings, could entertain the base idea of abandoning such an earthly paradise; which last idea brought him at length to the special cause of that morning's assemblage. Looking down upon the younger lad with a benignant regard, for a few moments he appeared to be struggling with his overcharged heart; then, relieving it by a long-drawn sigh, he proceeded in a touching manner to describe the beautiful, innocent, loving boy, whose mind, hitherto so pure, had been poisoned by deep, designing, artful elders, whom no kindness, no superior treatment, nor forbearance, nor overlooking repeated transgression, could subdue or win over to the side of virtuous contentment, but who were ever the same incorrigibles, the bane of their fellows; and who, but for a mistaken feeling of compassion for the terrible consequences that might ensue during the remainder of their existence, should have been expelled long ago; but that was not to be thought of, said the speaker in tones of commiseration, the disgrace attending a dismission from such a seat of learning would be altogether too severe a punishment. It need not be said that at this point of his harangue he spoke with much feeling, but which, it must be added, even though it affords a further

proof of the ingratitude of the audience addressed, was no reciprocated. 'However,' Mr. Kearas went on to state, 'as further forbearance was impossible, it had been decided that morning that due and severe castigation, followed by other severe treatment, should be meted out to the delinquents, whoever they might prove to be.

At the conclusion of his address, Mr. Kearas turned to his staff, and, after a few words had passed between them, took the rope that Mr. Grippem held in his hands, and further informed the school 'that, after an examination this morning of two or three of the senior boys, decided evidence had been obtained that the rope now produced, and found hanging at the up-stairs window, belonged to Trelawney, and therefore was satisfactory evidence of that person's complicity in the daring attempt to disturb the peace and harmony that had hitherto reigned throughout the well-regulated establishment; that doubtless he had fastened it himself and lowered the culprits to the ground, as it required the aid of a large boy to effect the descent.'

Prepared as Frendzburgh had been, by the issue of the preceding night's *emeute*, for some high-handed proceeding towards himself, he was nevertheless quite unprepared for this mode of dealing with the case, and somewhat disconcerted by the ingenious device for implicating him in the plot of running away, not anticipating any such attempt as an excuse for carrying out the usher's threat, but who had thus adroitly enlisted his superiors in his contemplated revenge.

Indignant at being thus falsely accused, he glanced over at the opposite desk, and, by the furtive looks and behaviour of two or three of the seniors, one of whom was Aslem, at once recognised who the witnesses were whose evidence had connected him with the unfortunate affair. Aroused by this malignancy, and the fact that, contrary to all usage, he had dared to bear (in this case false) witness against a schoolfellow, he leaped over the desk, and was in the act of seizing the culprit, when Aslem dived under the desk and reappeared on the other side.

'Come up here, Trelawney!' shouted the junior master, greatly incensed at this unheard-of breach of discipline, and that, unhappily for the lad, was viewed as such an aggravation of his already assumed defiance of law and authority, as at once (had there been no other urgent motive) to enlist him entirely on the side of the usher.

Mastered by his strong passion, the order thus issued was

unheeded, until, repeated in harsher and more imperative tones, he became aware of the precise nature of the mandate.

'Did you hear?' said the master.

Frendzburgh hesitated, looked over at Aslem, shook his fist, and then walked up to the place where his presence was requested.

The usher, as he approached, appeared agitated, nervously twitching his cane, and passing his fingers through his hair, and on his arrival at the platform, unable to restrain himself, stepped in front of Mr. Kearas, but who thereupon exclaimed, 'Mr. Grippem, you will please leave him to me!' The usher drew slightly to one side.

'Now what have you to say? the truth will serve your purpose best.'

The insinuation thus conveyed, that he would do otherwise than speak truthfully, caused him to regard the master with a look that did not tend to mollify his anger; but, on repetition of the question, coupled with the demand as to what he knew about the rope that he held up in his hand, he recovered himself sufficiently to state that, 'as to the rope, he knew nothing about the way in which it had got where it was found; that, had he been aware, at least in a case so improbable of success, he would have done all he could to prevent the younger lad's flight;' at the same time boldly asserting that, 'had he assisted, he would not deny it.'

Unfortunately the supercilious tone in which a portion of this explanation was made rendered it too obnoxious to be received with any favour, and, bidding him stand further round, Mr. Kearas called Willie forward, and demanded where he got that rope.

'Oh, that rope hasn't anything to do with it; it wasn't any good,' replied the boy, anxious at the outset to exculpate his friend.

'Where did you get that rope?' interposed the usher, unable to restrain himself.

'Leave him to me, Mr. Grippem, I beg you.'

The usher bowed and retired.

'Now, like a good boy, tell me all about it, and I won't punish you,' said Mr. Kearas, patting his head, and looking down upon him very benignantly.

'Please, sir, I didn't use the rope,' said Willie, still under the impression that, if he could show the rope to have been in-

operative towards his flight, he would thereby exonerate his friend.

'You didn't use the rope!' exclaimed Mr. Grippem, again interposing,—'you didn't use the rope! You little liar, didn't I get it'—

'Mr. Grippem, will you allow me,—will you, sir? Now answer me, my boy, whose rope is that?'

Willie looked towards Harfagr, but his expressionless face gave no token of interest in the proceedings, having passively resigned himself to the inevitable. Next he cast a hurried glance towards Frendzburgh, as though expecting aid there, but, obtaining none, sighed, and twisted his fingers violently.

Mr. Grippem was again about to interfere, unable to endure this methodical mode of procedure, but a frown from the master constrained him.

'Come, sir, now tell me, like a good boy, whose rope is this?'

'I think'—said Willie, hesitating.

There was a general stir in the school.

'Come, speak out, don't be afraid,' said Mr. Kearas encouragingly; 'no one shall touch you.'

Every breath was hushed to catch the name, and even the usher appeared gratified at the revelation now about to be made.

'Don't be afraid to tell,—we all know,' looking at Trelawney. 'Whose did you say it was?'

'Aslem's, I think, sir.'

The effect of this unexpected announcement was electrical; a murmur ran through the whole school, the boys being unable to suppress their expressions of astonishment, mingled with delight or anger, according to their predilections, at this presumed audacity of the boy to save his friend. Aslem started to his feet to protest against the little liar, as he termed him; whilst master, teachers, and craftsmen regarded each other with astonishment.

'There,' exclaimed Mr. Grippem, as soon as he had recovered, —'there's your good boy for you! Hand him over to me, sir; he's as great a scoundrel as any of them. Who told you,' addressing Willie, 'to tell that abominable lie?—who told you, eh?' and before Mr. Kearas could interfere, he struck him a blow on the arm that caused him to writhe with pain.

'Silence!' shouted the schoolmaster, which was reiterated by the usher and his deputy, the disturbance throughout the school

having by this time reached a demonstrative stage, and several boys got into antagonism, having proceeded from words to blows. 'Which of you boys knows this rope? Now, quick, before I'—

Observing two boys at that moment with their heads together, Mr. Grippem interposed, and shouted out, 'There's two boys know something about it, Swales and Gell.'

'Swales and Gell, eh? Oh! oh! Come up here, you two.'

The boys hesitated, when, seeing that Mr. Grippem was in the act of descending from the platform, they hastily left their seats, and, after one or two dodges, took their station at the forum.

As the reader has already had a specimen of the ingenious mode adopted to obtain sundry unpremeditated recriminations, it will be only necessary to state that, after several enforced inculpations, at the termination of which the rope was found to have had more owners than strands, Mr. Kearas came to the sage conclusion that he had discovered a deep conspiracy, of which he considered Willie merely the scapegoat; but, having thus far failed to implicate Trelawney without having recourse to the direct testimony of Aslem, whose private information, at the conclave held before the senior schoolmaster and his wife, had shown him to be the guilty party, he resolved to make a further effort to elicit the required additional corroboration from the last boy called up, known to be in favour with Frendzburgh, and who was Trotter.

'You see, Mr. Grippem, we're getting to the bottom of it. How judiciously it requires one to proceed, calmly and with one's wits about them,—eh, Mr. Shadd?' said the junior schoolmaster, looking from the former to the latter; then addressing the boy, 'Now save your hide and tell me all about it, Trotter.'

'Please, sir, I can't tell what I don't know.'

'Dare you answer me that way!' said the schoolmaster, thrown off his guard by the boy's pert manner, and aiming a blow with an impetus that caused him to lose his balance and stumble off the platform, clutching at Frendzburgh, whom he dragged to the floor with him. The two ushers ran to his aid, and raised him up, and assisted him to remount the dais. Having hurt his knee, that, with the awkward feeling occasioned by the fall, especially as he heard the titter going through the school, put him into a towering passion.

'Now, Mr. Grippem,' said he in an accusing tone, as though that person had been a party to his mishap, and rubbing his knee the while, 'there must be no more of this tomfoolery.'

Then turning to Frendzburgh, his face glowing with rage, he exclaimed with emphasis, 'Now, sir, tell me instantly what you know about this rope.'

Mr. Grippem's countenance lit up with a savage delight at the altered tone and manner of his superior.

'As far as I know,' replied Trelawney, 'that rope originally belonged to Aslem.

'It didn't!' shouted Aslem, rising in his seat; 'it's a whopper.'

'Hold your tongue, boy. Well, what more?' said the master.

'I remember taking it from him some time ago.' Aslem was about to interrupt, but a shake of Mr. Grippem's cane silenced him. 'And yesterday—I mean the evening this boy went off—I got it to tie up some rabbit food cut in the field, and what became of it afterwards I don't know.'

'You do know, and will know before we've done with you,' responded the usher. 'You see how it is, sir, it's no use asking any more questions, or listening to any more lies about it,—I've seen him, and Mr. Shadd's seen him, and we've all seen him, alone with this boy, going into by-places, concocting this scheme; and there isn't in the school a more insolent, dangerous fellow,—presuming on his size to defy us all, and go about poisoning the minds of every boy that enters the school. And so he'll go on, till *you* and *all* of us will have to give up all control of it.'

'Never, Mr. Grippem, never,' said the junior master, additionally provoked by this artful harangue of the vindictive usher. 'Never; this day ends it. And we'll see who's master here. Go to your seats, all but Trelawney and these two boys. Now, Mr. Grippem, horse him.'

Under less exciting circumstances, Mr. Kearas would have thought twice before committing himself to such a questionable proceeding as attempting to flog a boy of Trelawney's size and precedents; there were special politic reasons in his case why he should so hesitate. But, wrought up to the required pitch by his second in command, who had long watched for this opportunity, as well as incensed at Frendzburgh's manner, which he looked upon as insolent and defiant in the extreme, he yielded himself to the malignant influence exerted, backed by his own ungovernable temper.

Chuckling at his success, and half fearful the order might be countermanded, the usher instantly prepared to put into execution a proceeding, the issue of which he deemed no longer

doubtful, with the opportune aid now at his command. Conscious, too, how crushing it would be to Frendzburgh's sense of manliness, he entered into it with a savage delight, that betrayed itself in the curling smile that settled on his face, to which it imparted a hideousness that made all around regard him with a feeling of awe.

Stunned by the humiliating sentence, Frendzburgh did not notice or even hear the command of the usher to strip; and it was only when he had grasped him by the collar of his coat, and jerked him to the opposite desk, that he recovered himself sufficiently to fully comprehend the state of the case, when by a dexterous twist he released himself from his hold, sending the usher against the desk, from which the boys instantly scattered. The usher gathered himself up, and again grasped him with one hand, whilst with the other he raised his cane to strike him on the head, but a blow from Trelawney on the collaring arm, causing him to let go his hold, saved him. The southern blood (for, as before intimated, he was believed to be a Creole) was now at its highest point; he threw down his cane, and, seizing him by the ears with both hands, was about to dash his head against the desk, when Tommy Kaily, whose regard for the youth had caused him involuntarily to approach, interposed, and exclaimed,—

'Nah, doan't tret 'im soa, tha's happen breeak 'ee's neck;' at the same time with his own hands unloosing the usher's hold.

'Stand back, or I'll break yours,' roared the infuriated man.

'Trelawney, you scoundrel!' exclaimed the master, as, with birch in hand, he stepped down to the aid of the teacher, and by this time almost as enraged as the other, 'off with your clothes, and across that desk this instant!'

'Over, over, you scoundrel, or I'll break every bone in your skin!' exclaimed the usher, as he made another rush at him, but which the youth avoided by getting behind Tommy.

'Mr. Kearas,' said the boy appealingly, as he stood under the shelter of the tailor, 'I had nothing to do with this affair, on my word and honour, as the boys will tell you themselves.'

Whereupon both Willie and Harfagr attempted to confirm this assertion, but were roughly pushed aside by the master, and ordered to silence.

'You had!' screamed the teacher.

'Well, if you insist I had,—there,' said Trelawney, picking up the cane and handing it to the master, 'strike me,' and he held

out his hand, 'or beat me with it as I stand here, and I'll submit, and take it all; but don't try to flog me, for I *won't be flogged.*' There was an earnestness and firmness in the boy's manner and tone that convinced them their purpose could only be effected by violence; and thereupon the teacher, who during this address to Mr. Kearas had got behind him, exclaimed, 'You won't, eh? we'll see to that;' and, dragging him to the desk lower down, swept the boys therefrom with his clenched fist. In their terror to escape they upset the form upon his foot, the pain of which caused him to relax his hold, and for a moment to stamp and writhe, but only a moment, the determination to accomplish his purpose deadening him to all else. Mr. Kearas, too, had thrown himself into the affair with a will, and the two now made desperate efforts to get him over the desk, but which with equally desperate energy he resisted, at times holding on to the master, at others forcing the desk before him.

'Here, you, Shadd!' halloed the master, 'what are you gaping it? Come and help,—take hold of his legs.'

Mr. Shadd started at the summons; he had been looking on with exceeding trepidation, rather receding than advancing to take any part in the struggle, but at the demand approached, just as a fresh attempt was being made to get him on to the desk, and, as ordered, took, though cautiously, hold of one of his legs, and as a consequence was the next moment back where he came, rubbing his chest with such contortions of face and body as seemed to intimate that he had received his share of the honour to be gained in such a contest.

'Kaily,' blurted the master, 'and Jurdy, come here this minute.'

As the two approached, the former whispered, with a kindly interest, to Frendzburgh, and begged him, like a brave chap, to take it quietly.

'Never! Don't touch me, Tommy! I don't want to hurt you,' said the panting boy.

'Go to the other side,' screamed the usher, as the master and himself had, after another struggle, got his head and shoulders on the desk, 'and pull with all your might, both of you.'

Feigning to yield, Frendzburgh allowed them to fancy they had succeeded in getting him on the top thereof, when, placing his hands thereon, he swung himself over to the other side; but, finding his way blocked by the two men who had got there as directed, he dived under the desk.

For a space all seemed glad at the temporary respite, and the two chief actors arranged their clothes, and wiped the perspiration from their faces. Mr. Kearas' waistcoat was torn open, his collar had got as high as his temper, and Mr. Grippem was in no better plight.

'Now, come out,' said Mr. Kearas, 'and have it over, and I'll promise not to be too severe.' He was getting doubtful as to the issue. But Mr. Grippem's temper had been too fearfully aroused to tolerate such moderation, and, looking round, he shouted to bring him the rope.

'Please, sir, flog me instead,' said Willie, who had been looking on hitherto in mute terror.

'I'll flog you when I'm done here,' said the usher, as he gave him a blow on the side of his face that sent him reeling. 'Bring me the rope.'

After a search it was stated it was not to be found; the fact was, on the first demand, Harfagr had thrown it under the platform.

'Give me your handkerchief, Shadd.'

Mr. Shadd had none, it being a luxury with which he was not familiar. Mr. Kearas handed his, with which the usher crept under the desk, calling on the rest to assist. But, after an effort, the master was obliged to give up, a rush of blood to the head following the attempt.

'Can't you pull him out, Mr. Grippem?'

But Mr. Grippem was engaged in a scuffle that precluded his attending to any suggestions. With the handkerchief he was endeavouring to fasten Frendzburgh's hands behind him, but on every occasion the other contrived to slip them out of the noose. Despairing of success in any other mode, he announced his determination to flog him as he lay on the ground; and thereupon, approving the idea, Mr. Kearas ordered Mr. Shadd and the two men to come to the usher's assistance, whilst he himself also knelt down to further aid. A fierce struggle now ensued, in which the odds were strongly against Trelawney holding out any longer.

The state of the boys was one of intense excitement, scarcely controllable. At times convulsively clasping each other, then starting up in their seats and standing on the desks, until forcibly pulled down by their fellow-scholars. Presently a whole form of boys would upset, and occasion an alarm that vibrated through the school, whilst one or two stood out on the floor, squaring

at the master and ushers, and, approaching the scene of conflict, with difficulty restrained themselves from joining therein.

The dark countenance of the usher was livid with passion, and more than once he dealt a blow at his prostrate victim, which, but for the shielding arm of Tommy, would doubtless have seriously injured him. By this time, however, his coat was torn from his back, and his shirt in shreds, and it was becoming evident that, if the contest continued, even he could not hold out much longer. Just then, the greater portion of the school, unable longer, despite the schoolmaster's threats, to repress the feverish restlessness that impelled them on, had crowded down to the scene, and in their eagerness to witness the affray were violently pushing one another forward. Borne on by the pressure, the foremost boy tripped over Mr. Shadd's projected leg, and fell, causing the next, who had leaned on him for support, to follow, and in a second the whole posse fell forward, and turned over the desk, which in its descent inflicted wounds and bruises on the majority of the assaulting party. The usher scrambled up with a bleeding head, while Mr. Shadd and Jurdy were for the nonce jammed to the floor by the desk resting on them; Tommy, notwithstanding that worthy limped off rubbing his shins, it was generally believed escaped unhurt, secretly chuckling at the issue, his assistance throughout the affair having been of a doubtful character, or, as Frendzburgh afterwards laughingly acknowledged, all a sham. Mr. Kearas, who also had been fortunate enough to get off with nothing more than a slight bruise on his hand, besides damage to his apparel, which was in a very disordered state, retreated to the desk, and, under the apprehension that the school was in mutiny, grasped the ruler to defend himself. Frendzburgh, unhurt by the fall, leaped to his feet, and fastened his clothes as best he could, the blood dropping from his nose and his disfigured face, whilst Willie, overcome, threw his arms around him, and sobbed out, 'O Fren, Fren! I've done it all.'

Disengaging himself from the boy, he turned and staggered from the room, no opposition being offered; in fact, all appeared too much exhausted to renew the fray, and glad of an armistice. After Doctor Kaily had applied a cobweb to the teacher's head to staunch the blood, and order had been somewhat restored, as well as garments put into shape, Mr. Kearas, junior, followed by his staff, looking mutually crestfallen, returned to the house.

Scarcely, however, was the door closed, before a yell of triumph resounded through the school-room, and in the confusion that ensued through the mad gambols of the half-wild boys, slates and books were aimed at Aslem, who, convinced of the futility of attempting to discover the offenders at such a time, quickly beat a retreat in company with his friends.

CHAPTER XL.

THE MORNING NEWS—DESPATCHES FROM ABROAD.

A FEW days had elapsed since the abortive attempt to flog Frendzburgh had terminated so abruptly and unsatisfactorily; and subsequent to which the consultations between masters and teachers had been frequent, as to the wisest and safest course to be pursued in order to a due restoration of authority, perceptibly weakened by the issue of that day's proceedings, since, for the first time in the remembrance of the oldest scholar, it had been demonstrated that authority could be successfully resisted, although at such great odds as would be more likely to deter than invite a repetition of the attempt. Thus far the deliberations had resulted in nothing decisive. At one time it had been determined to carry out the flogging when the school had retired to bed; but this, on reconsideration, was abandoned, as, apart from the possibility of such a course being viewed by the boys as an admission of lack of power to administer correction at the proper time and place, there were grave objections to such a course being taken within the main building, hitherto invested with a sanctity that appeared to affect all whilst within it. The extra facilities that would arise from transferring the effort to the bed-rooms at night were such as would be likely to operate more to the advantage of the boys than the masters; for, emboldened by the successful resistance in daylight, under cover of the darkness (for the lights were certain to be extinguished) not only would a destruction of bedding and windows occur, but the persons of the executive themselves would doubtless suffer considerably, and in the end the attempt might issue in another and more inglorious defeat, for the time converting the house into a Bedlam. So the matter remained in abeyance, awaiting some favourable occasion that might accidentally present itself. For the present Frendzburgh

was placed in Coventry, the masters and teachers forbearing any further notice of him.

With Willie and Harfagr, however, there was no difficulty,—they were sentenced to the usual punishment awarded to all would-be deserters. Two chains or fetters were fastened above their ankles, on the right leg of the one and the left of the other, the ends of said chains being both attached by a staple to the same short, heavy log, that they were compelled to drag between them as they moved about.

By the school Trelawney was now regarded with almost as much deference as the usher himself; they were astounded at his conduct, as well as jubilant at the result, and not a boy, save two or three, but would have flown to execute any command he chose to give. But this general homage was not likely to affect a boy of the generous instincts of Trelawney, at least to their disadvantage. That he was sensible of the *prestige* he enjoyed, and on provocation might be tempted to abuse it, there is no doubt, for he was human; but, wanting that provocation, he was more likely than ever to employ his influence for the good of the bullied. And yet, enviable as was his position, he was dissatisfied: there was a Mordecai at the gate,—another proof that he was human. Indignant at the part Aslem had taken in the affair, he brooded sullenly over the attempted degradation, and Aslem's possible triumph thereat; and, yielding to his wounded feelings, secretly resolved to be avenged, not only on him, but on the others who had immediately abetted him. These, however, warned by what little of conscience remained, and the significant, menacing signs, were careful to avoid any contact out of school, for the present; his late contest had taught them to fear, if not otherwise to regard him.

Harbouring such designs, and still smarting under the wound that the attempted degradation had inflicted on his naturally proud disposition, it is not surprising that for a few days he became somewhat morose; and as he moved through the grounds, the younger boys missed the cheery word and the encouraging smile that had won him so many hearts prior to this event, and now were more eagerly looked for than ever, satisfied of his ability to protect. In effect, during the period to which he surrendered himself to cankering thoughts that were eating their way to his magnanimous heart, all were more or less sensible of a change in his behaviour: the darker shades of character were rising to the surface, and in proportion the

brighter and better were disappearing. Endowed by nature with attractive moral qualities, they were not proof to trial. It requires more than nature to effect this. Virtues, the offspring of natural goodness, differ materially from those the outgrowth of piety; the former have too much alloy, the latter only are sterling.

The excellences prominent and innate in some noble specimens of humanity, though they may for a time dazzle, and even be mistaken for the true emanations of a renewed heart, will not bear the testing process, but, brought in contact therewith, their genuineness will assuredly disappear. There is a social morality that co-exists with dormant evil. The electro-plate beautifies the nickel, but does not transmute it into the more precious metal; and while it claims our admiration, we are not deceived as to its intrinsic value, which a little friction, more or less severe, would soon reveal, and show that, brilliant as may be its exterior, underneath it is but nickel. The strictest moral conduct may exist with a total aversion to the spiritual; to this the Word of God bears continual testimony, whilst human perverseness is ever demurring thereto. Hence the struggle to obtain for moral virtues the recognition of Christian graces. Hence, too, reader, the danger of being misled by certain writers, whose ignorance is portrayed in their model. How customary is it for such to conduct us to the dying bed of their hero or heroine, and, drawing aside the curtain, exhibit the object around whom our sympathies have been drawn, and with whom our hearts have been interwoven, by the charm of the beautifully ordered but unnatural life, and there to see them passing away so happily, so purely, and so angelically; whilst every step in the process that conducted thereto proclaims that such gentle, loving, beauteous object was essentially Christless, and therefore spiritually as well as naturally dead. The cleansing process, familiar to Christless authors, whereby their sublimated idol is lodged in heaven with *angels*,—yes, we must do them this credit, they rarely or ever assume to place their cleansed ones among the blood-washed,—is not of heaven. And lest any reader charge his ultimate destiny upon such false teaching, we have paused thus in our story to disclaim all fellowship therewith. That many admirable qualities, shining with peculiar lustre, and distinguishing their subject, may cause their possessors to stand out prominently as models for imitation, is not questioned. Men who with integrity fulfil their obligations to their fellow-men are a blessing to any community, and usually obtain their

reward in the respect and honour accorded them. But their obligations to their God cannot be fulfilled independent of the unaccepted claims of Christ. An appeal to such, when happily *born again*, will confirm this, and call forth an earnest avowal that, while valuable and a blessing to them in their temporal or secular condition and affairs, in themselves they were only the meretricious trappings that concealed the filthy rags beneath; the adhering to which placed them outside the pale of that salvation provided for sinners *only*. Stripped of these, they appeared in their native deformity. The *heart* must be *changed;* the medium to effect which is not the plastic human moulder, who only mars his Frankenstein in the vain attempt to endow him with heaven-born gifts, daubing him with untempered mortar, whilst he places in his victim's hands a forged passport to heaven.

Harfagr had considered himself as unaccountably fortunate in having got off so easily, which he justly ascribed to the circumstance of Trelawney monopolizing all the attention on the occasion, when otherwise it would have descended on himself with its fullest force. His forced companionship with Willie he rather enjoyed; but to the latter it was daily more galling. Independent of its effect on his spirits, it was now producing the usual effects in the laceration of his leg, the blood oozing from which, matting the worsted sock, formed into a hard lump, and caused an aggravation of the pain. To alleviate this in some measure, Mape generally carried the log in his hand, and, besides stuffing a piece of rag between the ring and his fellow-sufferer's flesh, was careful to avoid causing any strain on the fetter. The confinement and torture were, however, telling on Willie physically and spiritually, and defied his companion's attempts to rally.

Had not Frendzburgh been so absorbed with his own resentful thoughts, he could not have failed to remark the change; but his own sufferings and mortification had been too deep to permit his unbending or diverting his thoughts to one that, had he suffered himself to attend to his mute pleadings, he would have owned had too permanent a lodgment in his better nature to be indifferent to. From appearances, he had no doubt that a latent intention of exacting the penalty still existed in the minds of the defied authorities, against which it behoved him to be on the watch to counteract; and this, in addition, helped to withdraw him from communication with his young friend, who needed the sympathy he could not find in the ungainly boy to whom he was so literally yoked, and who, in this constant closer contact, was

becoming every day more irksome to him, causing him to yearn with increased longing for a restoration to the regard of the only one that could understand and reciprocate his feeling.

'There's summut up to-day, lads,' said Cognod, who as monitor had been busily employed in waiting on Mrs. Kearas, but had taken the opportunity of her temporary withdrawal from the kitchen to slip out.

'What is't? tell us!'—'Tell me!'—'Tell, there's a good chap!' resounded from the group to whom the intelligence was conveyed.

'Well, I doan't like, but I ken there's summut;' he shook his head, and looked mysterious.

'Well, can't ye tell a feller? you know I owe ye something.' A reminder that seemed to have an immediate effect, for Master Cognod thereupon remembered that the missus was waiting, and before he could be intercepted had escaped back to the kitchen. His place was, however, quickly supplied by his fellow-monitor, who during the old lady's absence had grabbed a hot potato out of the pot and transferred it to his pocket, and rushed out therewith, but was now as eagerly engaged in shaking it out at the foot of his trousers, he having forgotten in his hurry that the said pocket had been torn out, and in consequence, the potato, being next his skin, was playing old gooseberry therewith. As it fell a scramble ensued, that ended in the esculent being very generally partaken of in the form of mashed potatoes.

'What's up?' exclaimed half-a-dozen boys, surrounding the chopfallen monitor, as soon as they had completed their unexpected feast at his expense, and satisfied themselves that there was nothing else in the edible line concealed about his person. Of course, at first this kind of treatment did not dispose him to become very communicative, but a few tonics, in fisticuff doses, soon restored him to his normal state.

As monitors, whose duties privileged them to hang about the kitchen and pantry to assist in the preparation for dinner, were on that account expected to be posted up in the current news of interest to the establishment, they were for the time being of some importance, and their communications looked forward to with as much zest as would be the intelligence contained in any daily newspaper for which they were the substitutes. The interest of the morning's report varied with the intelligence of the party by whom it was communicated, some possessing a much more fertile genius than others in the production of inferences, surmises, and even *facts*, from a word or a movement of the

officials, who ever and anon communicated with the school-mistress at her headquarters in the kitchen. But as monitors were known always to look after number one, it was no unusual occurrence, whilst he was being drawn out into an elaborate relation of the morning's news, for the partner of the anxious interrogator to be employed in the meanwhile extracting sundry bits of meat, bread, or other such dainties, from the hinder pockets of the 'Grumbleby morning journal,' with which he stealthily made off to some quiet place, to be quickly joined by his said interrogating partner, with whom he there discussed the latest news in a very enjoyable manner. Of course this was not likely to occur again with *that* monitor. In the present case, however, a shake of the head of the abstracting partner intimated that there was nothing to abstract,—not that he, the monitor, was more scrupulous than any other, but, what was very probable, like others, he had taken especial care to conceal his perquisites of office before making his appearance; the suspicion whereof usually occasioned a diligent search by the knowing ones (whilst the monitor was thus engaged in conveying his intelligence) within the adjoining wash-house, sometimes rewarded with equal success as the pocket investigation.

'Dedn't Cog tell ye the news?' said the monitor, as soon as he was sufficiently restored by the aforesaid specifics.

'Noa; he's sichen a fool, he can't open his mouth. What is 't?'

'It's come!' said the monitor, with a mysterious look.

'Is it?' responded the boys, and then repeated the two ominous words to one another with an equally mysterious look,—'It's come,'—which having been dwelt on, and each claiming to have known 'it would come,' it occurred to one of the number to inquire, 'What's come?' Whereat the same thought occurred to the rest, and the same demand was made all round.

'Well, gie me time, will ye?'

'Well, go on;' 'Go on,' urged the impatient audience, crowding closer round him, 'what's come?'

'The letter,' exclaimed the monitor, in a tone that indicated he felt the importance of the startling intelligence. The crowd turned to one another, and as soon as they had recovered the effect of the announcement, each in turn repeated the words, 'O my! the letter's come;' and again followed it up by the declaration that they 'know'd it would.'

'Oh, ain't I glad!' shouted a little fellow on the outside of the circle, unable to control his glee, 'the letter's come;' but a smart

blow from a bigger boy by his side arrested him in the act of repeating it at the top of his voice.

'Can't ye hold your noise, you gump ye! they'll be hearin'.'

'Yes, they'll be hearin',' repeated half-a-dozen voices in a menacing tone, that occasioned the small boy to transfer himself to a safe position.

'An' what's it say?—'What's it say about me?'—'And me?'—'And me?' was echoed all round. There was a general impression amongst the major portion of the school that, as they knew of no one in particular who wrote letters, a letter must therefore come from some universal friend, a friend of the whole. As a consequence, their informant was now assailed on all sides, and only avoided sundry punches and digs, threatened for his withholding information of which he was not in possession, by happily asserting it was about them all,—an announcement that inspired the delighted group with a desire to imitate the small boy, without considering that they too might be heard, and which happened; and as the noise attracted Mrs. Kearas' attention to the window, the other monitor appeared on the scene with the intimation that, if monitor number two did not make his appearance in the kitchen in a jiffy, his movements would be accelerated by a more successful process. As this resulted in his being forbidden to leave the place again, the boys vainly lingered about in the hope of his reappearance with a second edition of the oral gazette, affording later, if not more reliable, intelligence, until at length wearied, they wandered off in knots of two and three to discuss the certainty of the letter having especial personal relation to each.

Poor lads, they had been indulging in such hopes and expectations for many a day and month, hoping against hope, until hope had made their hearts sick, but which always revived with some new awakening. There was a minority who had settled into the number of the blessed who expect nothing, and as a consequence were never disappointed; these could be distinguished by their dull, stolid indifference to the excitement going on, notable by their absence from the charmed circle, that in other days had been as attractive and interesting to themselves, until, worn out by repeated and bitter disappointment, they had ceased to take any other part therein, than to aid in disabusing the fallacious expectations of their more sanguine or less experienced schoolfellows, or in derision sarcastically portraying their splendid prospects, at the conclusion demanding how much they would

take for their chance, which of course earned some token of disgust, either in withdrawal from further intercourse, or, where able, in prompt punishment.

But this time the 'morning chronicle' evidently had some foundation for the announcement of the receipt of a despatch from abroad, for at the usual hour the school was called in at the unusual command of Mr. Kearas, senior.

'I'm blow'd if t' owd measter ain't coming to pay us a visit!' exclaimed Trimmer, as he caught sight of that august personage turning the corner and jogging towards the school-room, accompanied only by the shadow. So rare an event soon spread through the grounds, and occasioned a rapid gathering of the boys, more than ever convinced that the monitor was right, and whose praise was now in every one's mouth as being 'a right chap for news, just the one for a *Times* foreign correspondent.' Yes, *the* letter had come this time. Who doubted it? Not even the most sceptical. And had brought the astounding intelligence that every boy was wanted,—all going—a few said 'home,' the rest said 'away;' and, according to usage, on the occurrence of such disturbing influences, an extra amount of hitting and kicking was distributed and accepted in good part.

The roll was called, and Mr. Shadd proclaimed silence, when every eye and ear was open and directed towards Mr. Kearas, who, after the accustomed formularies, and the usual protestations of regard towards old and young, big and little (it was observed that no exceptions were made), proceeded in a novel strain to express a hope that, during his *occasional* and necessitated absence from school, no boy had ever caused his son or any of the teachers to resort to even the semblance of harshness. Of course there were solitary occasions when a deep sense of obligation, both to themselves and to those who had committed them to his parental care, might compel them to measures that in the eyes of the boys would appear severe now, but would tell with most salutary effect upon their future, for which himself and all felt a deep solicitude. Not quite certain that he had explained himself, he went on to say that, even with such commendable intentions, his and Mrs. Kearas' consuming attachment to them all was such, that he could not and would not permit any one to be flogged (that is to say, without he deserved it), and therefore hoped it never had occurred at any remote period, much less of late; but if it had,—it might, it was possible for such things to occur unknown to him, he could not be expected to be everywhere, or know every-

thing,—but if it had—if it had,—well, he'd look over it this time, and say no more about it. After continuing a few minutes longer in this strain, he went on to appeal especially to such big boys as had grown up under his fostering care, but who had arrived at that age when their prospects in life necessitated the rending of those ties that had mutually enchained them to each other. Harfagr involuntarily dropped the log that he had held in his hand, which caused the schoolmaster to start, and Willie to wince with pain, and Mr. Shadd to request silence. But we shall not follow Mr. Kearas throughout the whole of an address that appeared, judging by his frequent pauses and the use of his handkerchief, to awaken emotions too strong for his tender heart, but come nearer to the conclusion.

'My dear children,—for so I regard you all, even in my sleeping moments, which is seldom; and that reminds me, as I was snoozing after breakfast by the fire, I fell into a reverberation in which, one by one, like a pandemonium,—I hope, Mr. Shadd, you teach the boys the meaning of such words, so that they understand me.' Mr. Shadd nodded assent; he might have added the last word was practically taught. 'Like a panderama, I say, you all ris before me, till, stirred within, I took one after another to my breast, and—you, Smith, if I see that again, I'll flog you.' The boys were becoming impatient and were rustling about. 'An' so I says, says I, I'll go down and talk to 'em, and tell 'em how sorry I was that Wilton, who both myself and Mrs. Kearas so tenderly love'—the thought affected the speaker, and he further resorted to his handkerchief, which he gathered in a heap, but did not apply to his face. 'Howsomever, we'll not rake up that, but forgive and forget, which is a glorious saying. Mr. Shadd, you'll not forget to teach that. Wilton, my child, where are you? Come up here and let me speak to you. Mr. Shadd, bring him here.'

Thereupon Mr. Shadd went over to the desk at which he was seated by the side of Harfagr, and, taking him by the hand, commenced pulling him, quite oblivious to the actual position in which the boy was placed. As a consequence it occasioned a sudden jerk, that made Willie cry out simultaneously with Mape.

'Bless me, Mr. Shadd! can't you bring him up without hurting him?' An observation that induced the shadow to lift him out of his seat, to facilitate which Mape got off the form at the same time, thereby occasioning the log to come down with a thud upon the teacher's foot, that made that person relinquish his hold and hop on the other, and subsequently stoop to rub his toe.

'What is the matter? What are you jumping about in that way for?' exclaimed the schoolmaster. 'Come up, Wilton, by yourself.' In obedience whereto the boy approached, accompanied by his fellow-prisoner. 'What do you want, sir? Did I ask for you? Go to your seat.'

'Aw doan't want nowt,' said Harfagr, turning round to comply with the order, and which brought Willie to a standstill. Whereat quite a movement took place amongst the boys in the immediate vicinity, who, taking in the perplexing state of the case, readily entered into the humour thereof, which they appeared to enjoy amazingly, urging in whispers first one and then the other to pull hard, one 'betting the old 'un 'ud beat,' whilst another 'wagered t'other fellah was gamest.'

By this time light had dawned upon the schoolmaster, and with a show of virtuous commiseration he called on Mr. Shadd to instantly release that boy, which, having been effected, Willie advanced, followed by the junior teacher, who at the schoolmaster's request lifted him on to his knee; and thereupon Mr. Kearas commenced sundry endearing manifestations, that caused Willie to shrink and the school to look on with astonishment, such an exhibition being quite unprecedented.

'Mr. Shadd,' said the affectionate schoolmaster, as Willie slipped down between his legs to avoid any further hugs, 'never let me know of such a proceeding again. Are such boys wild beasts, and to be chained like bears? Mr. Kearas paused, overcome by the monstrous idea, and again folded his arms around the boy, and hugged him after the mode the animals suggested are said to adopt when urged thereto probably by similar instincts. But, raising his eyes to observe the effect his conduct was having on the school, they fell on the teacher, who, interpreting his question as applicable to every boy, was responding thereto in a very sensible way by an effort to free Harfagr's leg from its encumbrance. 'That's right, Mr. Shadd, that's right,'—Mr. Shadd smiled at thus earning his superior's commendation, without, for once, being specially ordered to do what he was employed at,—'chain him by both legs; we'll teach him to corrupt so innocent a child.' Mr. Shadd stopped short.

'O no, sir,' remonstrated Willie, looking up at Mr. Kearas, 'he didn't corrupt me; it was all my own doing.'

'Oh, oh! fie, fie, Wilton! you mustn't speak in that way.'

'But I can't help it, sir, because it's true.'

'Didn't we catch him running off with you?'

'No, sir; if you let me tell you,—he'—

'No, no, it's all over now; we know all about it. Don't say any more.'

'But it isn't over if he's punished for me. Please, sir, won't you let him off this time?' and, taking the master's big paw into his own hand, he looked up pleadingly into his dull grey eyes.

'Now, now, don't, my boy,' said the master, patting his head and giving another hug; 'that's enough; he's a bad boy,—the worst, the most unprofitless in the 'Cademy, and it don't pay to have such about.'

'Then fasten me to him again,' said Willie, making an effort to move away from the master.

'Stop a moment, my child,'—detaining him by the arm. 'Do *you* ask—do *you* wish me to let him off this once?'

'O yes, sir, that I do.'

'Generous boy!' exclaimed Mr. Kearas, affecting to be touched by his earnest pleading. 'Boys, there's a pattern for you! and which you would all have been unanimously like had you been alike, and corroborated your hearts to the teachings of Mrs. Kearas and myself, as this boy has done.' Mr. Kearas rose and looked round the room, as though hurt at the base return the said teaching had obtained, until his eyes rested on Mape. 'Harfagr, stand forth,' exclaimed the master, with a wave of the hand; and as the boy obeyed the summons, holding up the log and loose fetter, he looked at him with a scowl, then addressing him, said, 'Unable to decline that virtuous child, which in spite —I say, in spite—of your corruptible influence, is virtuous still, you are free. Away.' And at another wave of his hand Mape hobbled—being too much encumbered to vanish—to the other end of the room, where he employed himself in the vain effort to become free, but to which enviable condition he only attained after school by the aid of Mr. Shadd.

'And now, lest that vagabone of vagabones should lay his corruptible hand on him again,' exclaimed the indignant master, sending a withering look after the retreating Mape, but who was already too much withered to be further affected thereby, and then, turning a benign look towards Frendzburgh, 'I shall commit this specimen of a child to the fostering care of one who is a pattern to every scamp before me. Trelawney, I hand him over to you, already aware of your regard for the boy, and that, under your insiduous teaching, he will become a paroxysm in body and mind. Take him,' said the condescending master, as

he handed Willie to Mr. Shadd to be transferred to Trelawney, to the delight of the young lad, reciprocated by the latter, who, after hearing his strong appeal in behalf of Mape, found himself unable to hold out any longer, and yielded to the better feelings of a heart against whose monitions he had vainly struggled.

Having concluded this very irregular proceeding, Mr. Kearas was about to descend from the platform, when the restless, anxious look of the school, in which, had he been more observant, he would have also detected a feeling of disappointment, made him hesitate, and it occurred to him that probably some gracious act, as a memento of this extraordinary visitation, had been expected; and thereupon, with his blandest of smiles, that for the moment revived the hopes of the boys that the announcement of the contents of the all-important letter was about to be made, he demanded in a playful manner what he should do for them. A state of excitement ensued, which exhibited itself in an unusual way, staring at one another as though some common shock had rivetted them to their seats. Not a voice was heard in response; even their breath seemed to be kept back, lest a movement should interrupt the anticipated announcement, that mouths as well as ears were open to catch and repeat. The suspense was painful; even the schoolmaster was affected by the appearance of the school, and, unable to account for it, looked round upon the teacher for an explanation, but which he was unable to give. At length, as one after the other heaved a long-drawn sigh, which became universal, Mr. Kearas, also relieved, condescended to ask what was the matter; when, unable to control his emotion, one poor heart-sick boy, whose expectations had been wrought to the highest tension by the whole morning's proceedings, broke down, and in a piteous tone exclaimed, 'Oh, arn't we all going, then?' and whereat a few more equally affected repeated the cry.

'Going!' exclaimed the schoolmaster,—'where to?'

'Home,' shouted the boys in an almost despairing tone.

The schoolmaster and teacher were bewildered, and, fearful that the disorder consequent on the late runaway adventure was assuming a new and dangerous character, which time and a little humouring would be more likely to abate than harsh treatment, he announced, as he intended when making the demand what he should do for them, that they were to have a holiday that and the succeeding day; and further, that as a notable magician was about giving some performances in the village,—schools to be

admitted half-price,—such of the boys as wished would have pocket-money advanced, sufficient to pay for their admission to witness how watches were fired into pockets from a pistol, hundreds of yards of ribbon drawn from the capacious mouth of the conjuror, previously manufactured in his stomach out of paper shavings conveyed thereto by chopsticks, and puddings cooked in a hat over a spirit-lamp without damage to the beaver, and many other tricks 'too numerous to mention.'

Any other time such an announcement would have created a *furor*, but, with few exceptions, it was received without any token of pleasure. A few days, however, sufficed to restore everything to its ordinary state, when more than one admission was made, that after all the head of the establishment was 'a gradely old chap,' the 'best of the whole kit;' others, again, deceived by appearances,—but which the older birds, who professed they were not to be caught with chaff, laughed at,—signified their intention of telling that worthy 'on usher if he ever whacked them again.' In one view of the matter, however, all were agreed, though they could not divine how,—'They know'd the letter had done it.' 'Oh, ah!' said one sagacious youth, '*he*'s written to say they're to mind theirselves, an' *he*'ll make 'em mind, I tell ye,'—an opinion that was generally adopted.

To Frendzburgh as well as one or two others—amongst them Aslem—it presented itself in a more restricted sense. Whoever was the writer, the letter concerned Willie, and probably himself, as was quite evident by their being the only two singled out for special consideration, and which subsequent conduct of master and mistress tended to confirm. Had it been otherwise, he was well assured the late events would have occasioned a very different treatment. Self-interest alone had induced the senior master to interfere at such a crisis, and in a way so obnoxious to his subordinates.

It was not long before these surmises were confirmed, though somewhat differently to what he had imagined, for Frendzburgh was privately informed that a letter had been received from Mr. Hawkes, stating that he was to return to London at Christmas, to be placed under Dr. Scarr's charge, it having been decided by his guardians that he was to be articled to that person, with the view of his becoming a surgeon. As nothing transpired to indicate that any mention was made of Willie, their conduct towards him was attributed to the fear that Frendzburgh's influence might affect his stay also.

CHAPTER XLI.

CONTRASTS.

SOME time had elapsed since the return to town of the Miss Herberts,—for so we must continue to designate the two young ladies, notwithstanding the strange revelations that have been made,—and amongst their visitors none had been more assiduous in their attentions than Mr. Zenas Hawkes, who was more than ever encouraged by Mrs. Herbert, into whose good graces he had effectually ingratiated himself by his sedulous behaviour towards her. Absurd as his mode of interesting often was, the deference to herself that accompanied his puerilities flattered the elderly lady's innate self-appreciation, and operated in obtaining for him a preference over his more stately though not less trivial rivals, who were in some measure more restrained by the respect her widowed position seemed to demand.

'I am sure, my dear, he's a very engaging young gentleman; even from the first I considered him prepossessing,' remarked Mrs. Herbert, as she sat reclined in the damask-covered arm-chair, habited in an elegant black watered silk dress, her feet resting on the fender in front of the fire which was blazing in the parlour grate.

'I cannot see what you discover in him so much to admire,' said Miss Harriet, as she rose from a similar position and seated herself on the sofa, a little chagrined at her mamma's pertinacity in always recurring to one whose manners were so detestable in her estimation.

'What I see to admire!—everything,—his easy manners, genteel appearance, and engaging conversation. What would call for admiration if these would not?'

'Engaging conversation! in which the theme from beginning to end is self, unless when paying some egregiously fulsome compliments; indeed, in my opinion he is an egotistical fop.'

'Because, my dear, your prejudiced mind renders you unable to discriminate between an elegant fashionable young man and a dandy trifler.'

'There, mamma, I think you have just hit it, for therein lies the distinction, the latter appellation suiting your favourite *à merveille*.'

'*My* favourite, as you term him, has only to withdraw his attention from a perverse, unimpressible girl, and mingle with the *élite*, to become the favourite of *daughters* as well as mothers.'

'I'm sure he has my permission to make the trial,' said the young lady, affecting to be fastening her bracelets.

'And, like many another silly girl, too volatile yet to know their own mind and interest, regret it all the rest of your days.'

'And die of a broken heart,—poor, dear Zany,—never to look upon thy like again.' The young lady commenced a search for her pocket-handkerchief, with the intention of applying it to her eyes.

'Now, do be serious for once. What possible objection can you have to him?'

'Oh, none whatever, of course!'

'Lively, so full of humour,—which of itself I would have imagined would have commended him to *you*,—that he keeps one laughing the whole time, and would banish the blues from the dullest.'

'So would Grimaldi.'

'His attitude'—

'Like a harlequin's.'

'I beg you'll allow me to speak, and not interrupt. If you had only some of his wit, and less burlesque, it would be more becoming.'

'Mamma,' said the young lady, nettled at the reproof, 'you've a high opinion of me, I'm sure. Compare me to that popinjay!' and she rose and walked over to the window in a pout.

'I'm astonished, Harriet, at your perverseness,—nothing but perverseness, I am convinced,' continued Mrs. Herbert, not disposed to give up her championship of her favourite. 'Besides, his disposition so resembles your own!'

'Ha! ha! well, now, mamma, you are provoking,—disposition like mine! then I'll change it.'

Mrs. Herbert was silent for a moment or two, then resumed, 'Were I a young girl, I'd take him to-morrow.'

'I'll resign him to you to-day.'

The conversation here ceased, each provoked at the other. Besides the reason above stated as influencing Mrs. Herbert in her partiality for the subject of this little controversy, the influence of the wary surgeon had been brought to bear with good effect. Conversant with the weaker as well as the more salient points in her character from a long acquaintance, he omitted no opportunity to advance the suit of one of whom personally he entertained as low an estimate as did the young lady herself, moved thereto solely by sordid considerations. Affairs of the heart, taking their colour from his own unhappy *liaison*, he regarded as marketable commodities, their value being regulated by the accidental adjuncts of birth, position, or fortune; and though he was not slow to discern in Harriet's behaviour, what the more obtuse lover failed to perceive, he did not deem this of such weight that, by a little judicious management, the scale could not be turned. The mother gained, and the elder sister worked upon by a covert power that he seemed to possess over her, he considered his prospects were sufficiently encouraging to warrant a more direct assault on the young lady herself, his only fear being in the want of tact in his pupil, over whom he, in consequence, became more watchful.

The foregoing conversation had taken place in consequence of a positive refusal on the part of Miss Harriet to accompany her admirer to the opera that evening. Although supported by Mrs. Herbert's sanction, and even expressed wish, Mr. Zenas had been compelled to retire disappointed; too conceited, however, to entertain a thought of any personal repugnance, content with Mrs. Herbert's apology, who, mortified at her daughter's indifference, assumed even a warmer manner towards the young lawyer than usual, thereby effectually dissipating any rising doubts, if he had any, but which, from his joviality at parting, it is presumed he had not. We should not, however, be doing Mr. Zenas justice, nor perhaps the young lady herself, did we hesitate to state that she had really inspired him with something more than admiration. He was in reality captivated, and, under the power of the new sensation, mingled with his blinding self-esteem, no wonder his obtuse intellectual perceptions were doubly obscured.

Anxious to gratify her parent, whose interest in her welfare she did not question by a compliance with her pronounced wishes as far as practicable, as well as with the evident though less obtrusively expressed inclinations of her sister, in whom her

heart was bound up, Harriet had latterly endeavoured to repress her sentiments towards the young lawyer, especially in the presence of her sister,—a course that had operated, however unintentionally on her part, as might have reasonably been expected, in affording an amount of encouragement to her admirer that in no wise modified the delusion under which he laboured, but had found expression in the ardent desire of Mr. Zenas, by the foregoing mode, to draw the imaginary bond closer, and at the same time excite the envy of his young male friends by the display of his triumph. And all this whilst he was becoming more distasteful to her. It was at this point that Miss Harriet realized the imprudence of her course, and that she was acting a part so repugnant that it could not be continued, however painful the issue, and had therefore spoken out in the unmistakeable language of the conversation held on Mr. Zenas' departure, which had so chagrined her disappointed parent, whose hopes had been raised by the late seeming compliance with her wishes.

During the interview with Mr. Zenas Hawkes, and the subsequent *tête-à-tête* of Mrs. Herbert and Harriet, Bertha had been alone in her own room, going through a proceeding now of frequent occurrence, and possessing for her a melancholy interest, the perusal of the earlier letters of Aubrey Grey, lingering with wrapt delight over the ardent and manly language employed to express his devotion. There was such a perspicuity and classic beauty in the style, that Harriet (who had been confidingly permitted the perusal of a few), equally with her more passionate sister, could but express her admiration thereof; but which, contrasted with the silly nonsense, as she styled it, she was in the habit of receiving from Mr. Hawkes, junior, on every possible excuse for addressing her, proportionably tended to depreciate that gentleman in her esteem.

Seated at her open desk, itself a memento of the one whose epistles covered it, Bertha had fallen into a train of thought suggested by the last letter perused, and the contents of which had more than ordinarily affected her, until, moved by some impulse, she folded the letters up one by one, and, tying them in a bundle, all but the one that had thus engaged her especial attention, instead of returning them to the desk, she rose and deposited them at the back of her bonnet drawer, covering them over with some of the articles therein. This accomplished, she re-seated herself at the desk, and leaned her forehead on her

cold thin hand, and once more her eyes were tracing the lines in the solitary retained letter, until, blinded by the scalding tears that rolled down her cheek upon the paper, she raised her other hand to her forehead, and, resting her head on both, sat motionless.

It was the last letter from Aubrey, that morning received. After his hurried visit in Wiltshire, he had written her, on his arrival at his post, a short, hasty note, little more than informing her thereof; since which, although she had punctually written him each week, this was the only one that had reached her; and though couched in his usual florid style, there were strange and mysterious words that called forth a crowd of maddening thoughts, and revived the terrible misgivings that the enigmatical words uttered by him towards the conclusion of their last interview had conjured up. Scarcely noticed at the time of utterance, it will be remembered with what painful effect they were recalled on her retirement to her chamber; and ever and anon subsequently they had started up unbidden, each time with terrible import, but as proudly and defiantly resisted But now on that paper—penned, premeditatedly penned, though not in such express terms—were words that, despite their ambiguity, seemed capable of but one construction, a condition that would, if correct, make life insupportable.

'But,' she argued, 'was it possible that she could have been deceived? had her confidence betrayed her? Was the apparently—nay, transparently—noble and honourable being to whom she had entrusted, not without becoming safeguard, as she had supposed, essential under the peculiar circumstances, her honour and her heart as priceless jewels, a cool, deliberate plotter? Impossible! she was convinced, at the period of its occurrence, he was incapable of harbouring a single thought, much less deliberately contriving a plot, so base, so heartless, as well as when the devotion of a guileless nature left no place for thoughts so vile. No, there she was safe. And as she recalled the attendant circumstances, she dismissed the suspicion that at that time any other than the purest motives had actuated one whose whole heart was open to her inspection, and had then never given the least occasion to doubt the sincerity and depth of his passion. Any question now, therefore, of his ingenuous frankness at that time would be a reflection on her own penetration and even common sense. For her imprudence in ever yielding compliance to such a step, she admitted she had deservedly suffered

and had long reaped the blighting effects thereof, precluded even from obtaining the sympathy of a sister who regarded her as a model, and loved her almost to idolatry, and from whom she was withholding what would have been the strongest proof of her confidence in her loving heart, and have been of such comfort to herself.

But as she reasoned thus on Grey's earlier singleness of character, and recalled her later experiences, that had already occasioned a shock to her sensitive nature, there came another argument not so easily confuted. Years had rolled by, and an education had supervened in a school in which the subtler faculties, that only awaited the opportunity, were developing. Unable to resist the fascination, his naturally metaphysical mind had luxuriated in the mystical concatenation of abstract ideas until he became an adept therein, still further incited thereto by the reward attendant on its perfection, and which his ingenuity and boldness of ideas were already gaining him. The tendencies native to his adolescence required a stronger foundation on which to build so perilous a superstructure, than natural goodness. To an ambitious gifted mind, human attachments, powerful as may be the ligatures, moral or sentimental, that bind, will in their tension be exceedingly elastic, if they do not eventually snap. The religious element will alone conserve the true, and that was wanting,—wanting, it must be avowed, in both parties. Dominated by influences so continuously in operation, and distant from the counteracting effects that her presence might be supposed to exert, it was possible—nay, did not his later procedure render more than possible?—that his heart had become estranged by alluring prospects, opening up a surer road to the goal of his ambition. The thought was repelled, but returned again and again, each time with added force, weakening the resistance made by the pleading heart, until, seemingly confirmed by the epistle before her, conviction flashed upon her that, urged by inordinate ambition and worldly interest, he had taken advantage of some irregularity in the procedure that their romantic natures and youthful ardour had unwittingly laid themselves open to. The possibility of such an issue was overwhelming. The cruel shaft pierced her bosom, barbed by the torturing sense of dishonour; and the baleful effect, like a simoon, fell upon her moral and physical being. The agony that resulted from the culmination of her reasoning into the acceptance of a belief so shocking, deprived her of consciousness.

Mrs. Herbert and Harriet had sat for some time, mutely pursuing their own estimate of the worth of Mr. Zenas Hawkes, and, had they compared conclusions, as may be conceived, they would have been significant from their inverse ratio; but as they did not, but continued to maintain a rigid silence, it was only when the heavy breathing of the elder lady made her daughter aware that she had succumbed to the soothing influences of her meditations, aided by the somnific effect of the fire, that she was recalled to a sense of her own listlessness. Thereupon she rose from the sofa, and placed the guard on the bars of the grate to protect her parent from sparks; then, ascertaining that she was comfortable as she reposed on the soft easy-chair, she glided noiselessly from the room, and ascended to the chamber of her sister, not surprised at her absence from the parlour, as of late she had courted solitude more than ever, which, however, without being objectionably intrusive, she ventured to disturb as often as seemly. Under the same feeling that led her to retire softly from the presence of her dozing parent, she gently opened the door of Bertha's room, but observing that she was seated at her desk, her head resting thereon, before advancing was about to inquire if she was disturbing her, when a second look made her hurry to her side. Her livid cheek rested on one hand, whilst the other hung loosely by her side. Alarmed, and with just sufficient presence of mind to prevent herself uttering a cry, she was about rushing back to call assistance, when, remembering how she had left her mamma, and how averse her sister was to attracting any manifestations towards herself, with as much calmness as she could command, she put her arms around her waist and carried her to the couch, when, having placed a pillow from the bed under her head, she proceeded to bathe her temples with cold water, and by the further aid of a vinaigrette from the dressing-table had soon the happiness of witnessing the restoration of her sister to consciousness, and presently a smile and a gentle pressure of the hand reassured the distressed girl. Slowly glancing around the room, as though to recall the occasion of her present state, Bertha's eyes fell on the desk. The flush that ensued, and her apparent nervousness, directed her sister's attention thereto, and, comprehending the cause of her uneasiness, she inquired if she should gather up the papers and place them inside the desk; and, without awaiting her assent, stepped over, and, depositing them therein, locked and gave her the key thereof.

Too weak to appear below, Bertha yielded to the solicitations of her sister, and permitted herself to be undressed, and retired to bed, where she was attended by Mary Jones, until relieved by Miss Harriet, who, at her sister's earnest request, made light of the matter to her mamma, attributing her early retirement to an extra sense of weariness.

Not caring to be disturbed, and surrendering herself to the same absorbing, sorrowful communings, Bertha remained during the next few days in her chamber, relieved only by the presence of her sister, who strove all in her power to distract her thoughts from what her discernment enabled her to understand to be the true cause of her debilitated state.

During this interval, and whilst thus employed, Harriet was one morning summoned by her mamma from her sister's room to an audience with Mr. Zenas, who awaited her presence in the parlour, and had dropped in to propose some new scheme by which he hoped to monopolize her company for a short period. The presence of Mrs. Herbert, whilst it had the salutary effect of repressing any usual badinage or petulant manifestations, was the occasion of his detention much longer than would have been the case had they been alone.

On her sister's withdrawal, Bertha had arisen from her couch and opened her desk, with the intention of availing herself of the opportunity of being alone to recur once more to Aubrey Grey's letter, the ambiguous, incisive wording of which had occasioned so much anguish, but was prevented so doing by a gentle tap at the door, which, not having attracted her attention, was followed by the turning of the handle and the head of Mary Jones peeping through the opening.

'Is that you, Mary?' said Miss Herbert, looking round. 'Come in.' Mary advanced with a smile, slightly abashed, her eyes fixed on a piece of paper that she held in her hand. 'What is that you have there?'

'Oh, if you please, I came to see if you thought this would do,' replied Mary, timidly holding out the coarse slip of paper for inspection. Miss Herbert took the proffered writing out of her hand, and seated herself at the desk to make out the hieroglyphics, but to accomplish which she was obliged to obtain the aid of Mary herself. Eventually, allowance being made for the orthography, the contents were translated, and read thus:—

'DEAR, DEAR LITTLE WILLIE,—Why don't you write for?

haven't you time? You're a bad, bad little boy, and when I see you, look out, you'll catch it. Oh, I've got such a lot to tell you of. Where do you think I am?—At Aunt Fanny's? No. I don't see pretty Polly now, they've sold it. I was so dull when you left. We don't live in the Lane now. Well, you couldn't guess where I am! I'm maid to a beautiful lady in a grand house, grander than ours; and I do love her sister so. I often tell her —I mean the beautiful lady—about you, and she listens, and she does like to hear me so, and I like her for that. She is going to ask the Doctor—the nasty old thing—to send this to you. Write soon. Lots of kisses from me, though I *am* a girl. Dear, dear Willie, from Mary Jones. Aunt Fanny's love. I say, Willie, do you 'member that time, you rogue you? I often think of it, and wish it was back. When are you coming back, dear Willie? MARY JONES.'

Miss Herbert requested leave to make a few alterations; having done which, she seated the lass at her desk, and after some failures, and the obliteration of one or two mistakes with her fingers, thereby necessitating a renewed effort on a fresh sheet of paper, Mary produced an improved edition of her letter. Adding some few words thereto, and enclosing a sovereign, Miss Herbert directed it, dropping a tear thereon as she did so, and took charge thereof, with the promise of impressing on the surgeon very particularly to have it duly forwarded to Willie, but which, although he promised faithfully to do, as there will not be an opportunity of referring thereto again, it may be here stated never reached him.

Mary had scarcely left the room, skipping down the stairs with a glad heart, when she reappeared with a countenance beaming with additional delight, and, without waiting the response to her knock, came breathlessly into the room, and announced the arrival of Miss Austen, who, she went on in a rattling style to say, would do Miss Herbert more good than fifty doctors; and, without waiting to hear the direction to show her up, was off at full speed, calling as she went, 'Come up—this way, Aunt Fanny —Miss Austen, I mean. I'm so glad you're come. I wrote Willie —Miss Herbert's got it—I gave your love. Not that way, mum, that's Miss Harriet's room,—I like her so. Ain't it a large house? There, that's the door;' and, giving a knock, she caught Miss Austen by the hand and led her to Miss Herbert, who received her with an assuring grace of manner that at once made her feel at ease.

Scarcely able to control herself, it was with difficulty Mary refrained from joining in the conversation that ensued, or replying for Miss Austen; observing which, Miss Herbert gave her some directions that rendered her presence necessary elsewhere.

A few remarks in reference to the little maid afforded Miss Austen the gratification of learning that Mary's young mistress was satisfied with her, notwithstanding her gabble, that occasionally required checking. This led to a short detail of her acquaintance with her, and thence naturally to Willie Wilton himself, during her reference to whom Miss Austen became more than once affected to tears, in which Miss Herbert joined her, especially when she closed by telling of the hush of the song because the songster had gone, and how there came a void, not alone in the room, or the house, but in hearts in which he had lived,—her own, and Mary's, and Mr. Grumphy's, the latter more needing such a tenant than either; and how they missed

> 'His bounding step upon the stair,
> His joyous accents everywhere,'

until it proved 'no more a home without their boy,' for the link was broken, the fragrance was gone, and then the little household scattered and went too.

At the conclusion Miss Herbert expressed herself in terms of great commendation of the loving, tender heart of Miss Austen, who had evinced so deep an interest in the little boy, who, she hoped, would yet have it in his power to acknowledge, while he could never repay her kindness. This was said with an emphasis and emotion that drew Aunt Fanny's heart closer to Miss Herbert, and led to an inquiry into her state of health, that caused the conversation to assume a more serious tone; during which the good woman dilated on the only solace for a wounded spirit, and support of an afflicted body, dwelling modestly, but in language confident, because exemplified in her own experience, on the blessedness of a firm reliance, through faith, on the Disposer of all events,—a faith that brings with it the conviction that we are not called on 'to shed a tear or breathe a sigh too many,' and that 'in every sorrow of the heart eternal mercy bears a part' with those who love Him.

The expression of her simple views led to a conversation somewhat perplexing to both, Miss Herbert's logical training inclining her to combat the simple reasoning of Miss Austen by a philosophical exegesis of ethics. At the conclusion of which,

however, too implexed to attempt to controvert, the latter would glide back so easily to the 'Word,' with which she was familiar, and, placing herself on its surer basis, so tenderly and lovingly urge its superior claims to consideration, transcending as it did in wisdom all human teaching, that, despite the natural disinclination of the heart, Bertha's conscience pleaded for her meek exhorter, whose earnestness and sincerity were depicted in her countenance, and proclaimed that she was in possession of the heart-ease that she herself had vainly sought in the creature. Still the proud intellect was unwilling to yield to requirements so humiliating.

'Were birth, culture, refinement—nay, uprightness and exemplary living themselves—no passports to heaven?—even as a groundwork utterly valueless? Must the column fashioned with artistic skill be toppled from such a base and lie prostrate in the dust,—in the same dust as the rude unshapely material from which it was separated? Must such descend to take rank with those that never knew a higher aspiration than the gratification of a depraved appetite?—be accounted in the same category with the miserable sinner that crouches amid pestiferous vice, and revels in fetid pollution? All on the same level before they can enter the narrow portal? Preposterous! Is not the very narrowness of the entry a pledge that, whilst the one may enter, the other is excluded?'

'Without the wedding garment none can enter,' responded Miss Austen. 'All alike need the "cleansing change within;" and who but One "can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" "Ye must be born from above;" and oh!'—as she spoke her face beamed with almost supernatural light,—'the blessedness, the joy, the ecstasy of that moment, when the chains fall off and the dungeon flames with light,—when for the first time the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto it!'

'And is it so instantaneous?' inquired Bertha, endeavouring to comprehend a philosophy inexplicable from natural causation, and that appeared rather as the outgushing of a diseased, or at best emotional constitution, which, if indulged in, tended to enthusiasm, and finally to fanaticism, and yet, as expounded by the heavenly-minded woman before her, that she could not reject; for the evidence of the repose for which she sighed was there.

'It may be—oftenest is,' replied the *divinely*-educated woman;

'although with some it is like the dawn of morning, the gradual rise of sunlight; but in either case it is light, emanating from the Fountain of light. But it must be sought with the earnestness of the parched, thirsty soul that seeks for the "cooling water brook;" there is no alternative. "Drink or die" is the fiat of Him who, whilst thus inexorable, pleads with an earnestness beyond comparison, and the intensity of whose desire to save can only be measured by what He has done, and is still doing, to effect our salvation, and to overcome our repugnance,—who "stands at the door and knocks," and asks, but, respecting your will, never forces an entrance. Fearful power this! even Omnipotence cannot save without your own consent; but that obtained, He and He alone effects the rest.'

Miss Herbert once more demurred, though with less positiveness.

But, moved by a subject so congenial, and the longing of her soul to lead to the same source from which her own happiness was derived, one in whom this short interview had occasioned a deep interest, Miss Austen rose to a fervour not usual with her, and exclaimed deprecatingly, 'Do not question the ability or the willingness of the Almighty, or object because you cannot mete your finite capacity with His. Human understanding is too finite to grasp or search out the way of the Infinite. Bow in submission. "Ye must be born again" is ringing out and around this planet, sounding along its valleys, echoed from its mountain sides, wafted to every isle, and rolled along to every shore, and will, until every nation and people shall have had the opportunity of receiving or rejecting the proffered mercy. To its necessity, every age, every nation, every household, and every living soul has borne testimony, from the day when the Creator drove His creatures from the garden until now, and will unto the end.'

At this point their conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the younger sister, who on some trifling excuse had left her mamma to entertain Mr. Zenas during the remainder of a visit which he appeared in no hurry to shorten. After an introduction, and a few words of course, Miss Austen took her leave of the sisters, with many expressions on the part of the elder of thankfulness for her instructive conversation, and an earnest request to repeat her visit at an early day.

As Miss Harriet did not return to the parlour until after the departure of her admirer, she of course underwent once more

the indignant remonstrance of Mrs. Herbert, whose very rigid notions of the proprieties were now so repeatedly shocked; concluding her appeal by a strong reference to her unladylike conduct, so utterly at variance with what might be expected from one who had been favoured with advantages such as she had. And as her upbraidings usually extended to her behaviour in general, she dwelt strongly upon what she termed her hoydenish conduct, savouring of the *bourgeoise* instead of being regulated by a code of postures that should have affected her every movement. Mrs. Herbert's notions of dignity and polite society were acquired in too artificial a school to allow any approach to familiarity with inferiors, and, as a consequence, she became additionally shocked when her sportive, buoyant daughter, glad to find temporary relief from the chilling influence of the upper rooms, descended into the domain of the servants, and, by the noise and sounds of laughter that resounded through the hall, gave intimation of her whereabouts. But although this evidence of having anything in common with grosser humanity was exceedingly mortifying to Mrs. Herbert, it caused her daughter to be an amazing favourite with the domestics, especially with the fun-loving Mary, all of whom, by their assiduous attention, evidenced their estimate of their not the less graceful for being natural young mistress, the sunshine of whose presence diffused such a warmth throughout an otherwise sombre mansion.

But a change was passing over even this irrepressible girl. Since the evening of Aubrey's visitation at Wiltshire, a cloud had settled upon her that she could not divest herself of, and though it had not immediately operated in repressing the overflow of her spirits, she had become more thoughtful than prior to that event. Of late, however, even these were becoming affected, as each day brought some painful assurance that her sister's health was declining; and it was not long before, in common with Mrs. Herbert, an anxiety for her delicate condition caused a sobriety of demeanour that affected the whole household.

CHAPTER XLII.

MORE FLAWS.

'EVERYTHING'S going wrong, everything!' said Mr. Skeggs to himself. He said it to himself because he had no one else to say it to, for he was seated alone, as usual, in his dingy office. It was some time after the loss of the suit of Scarr and Jenkins. Mr. Skeggs threw down his pen, and made sundry efforts to balance himself on the two hind legs of his stool, and which was finally accomplished by its tipping over and bringing him up with his back against the wall, in which position he continued his musings. 'All going to the—the—well, I might as well say it as think it; however, I won't, for I'm a bit of a saint myself, and it wouldn't, of course, be proper; an' 'sides, I know it 'ud grieve old Piety if I were to fall back (Mr. Skeggs had no reference to his recumbent position) after all the pains he's taken to get me to swallow them heavy doses, and well-shaken before taken they were, as friend Grumphy would say, though I don't think *he's* much of a saint. Always administered, too, after some ungodly relapse, as Hiram calls it; caused, as he says, by the unfortunate evidence (*that* seems to be quite in our line lately) of the remains of some old Adam that's dead and buried. No, by the by, he explained he ain't dead, but that he says is inside of me, and that's got to come out, though I never heard how he got in, or why, if he ain't dead, they buried him and made a graveyard of me.'

Mr. Hawkes' definitions had evidently assumed a strange embodiment in the fanciful brain of his pupil. For a short time Mr. Skeggs pondered the enigma, but, unable to fathom its subtility, he gave it up, shook his head, drew a long sigh, and then followed out his subject. 'It's enough to make a fellow weep, to hear him tell how bad I am, when, too, my superior advantages should cause me to increase in grace. I wish it would increase my wages; but I s'pose that's what he calls a carnal desire, and

ought to be overcome. But I don't know about that; I'd go in for that, it's natural, though he says nature's to be squelched, and that's another proof of old Adam's remains being here.' Mr. Skeggs placed his hands on his stomach, not quite certain of the locality. 'If it is, I'm most afraid there's more than his remains lying about me.' He paused, as though with the intention of grasping the last idea, but evidently gave it up, for he returned to his original thoughts, from which he had so far wandered.

'Well, as I said, everything's going wrong; I think there's a spell on us. And then to cap all, that Dashaway must get into trouble. I knew it; I said to myself, I knew he'd come to grief some day; and now he's in chokey. If I'd my way, I'd let him stop there; it's a very safe place. He won't distress his friends looking for him, running all over the town after him as I had the day before yesterday. Don't understand why he comes here for the dibs; there's a screw loose somewhere. Won't holy Hiram be jumping when he gets this billy-dux-it!' As Mr. Skeggs uttered this, he brought his stool by a jerk into an upright position, and took up a card that lay on his desk, on which was written,—

'DEAR HAWKES,—Arrested at the suit of that dem'd tailor, Pigeon. Pounce down on him, Hawkes, and send some money and bail me out *toute suite.* Excuse this—no paper.—Yours,

'H. LEJETTE.'

'JERLES PLACE, JONES PALACE, ROGUES LANE.'

'I'll lay it on his table, it'll help his morning's devotions. There's two good religious words for him to begin with, "dem'd," and what's t' other?—t-o-u-t-e s-u-i-t-e—touty swity—touty swity. I s'pose that's another wicked word. O my! won't he groan, and inwardly digest!' Whereupon Octavius took the card, with a writ that accompanied it, and laid them on Mr. Hawkes' table, and, returning to his desk, again resumed his original train of thought. 'But I'm real sorry for Figgins. It'll almost ruin him; he'll have to pay costs both sides. By Jove, we're in luck.'

At that moment Mr. Winkles knocked, and opened the door just wide enough to thrust his hand in, holding a small wafered note, and pronouncing Mr. Skeggs' name in an under-tone, he stated that was for him.

Octavius strode to the door, which he opened wide, and, taking the note out of his hand, 'begged Winkles would step in, as there was no one in the place but himself;' but which he de-

clined, as he informed him 'he knowed the old chap 'ud be coming 'stanter, which is as he'd met him in Ludgate Hill, an' had been a message for him to that 'ere Scarem's; at whose shop he received that note from the gentleman behind the counter in white sleeves, as looked like a cheesemonger.' Having said which, he closed the door after him, and retired to converse with the warehouseman under the archway leading into the back premises.

'Who can this be from, and what's he want?' observed Mr. Skeggs, as he turned over the note two or three times, and read and re-read the address, and was about laying it down with the intention of continuing his surmises, when it occurred to him that he could obtain a readier solution by breaking the seal; whereupon he very carefully cut round the wafer, and, opening it, read thus,—

'"DEAR SKEGGS,—Who's Trelawney? I think I've heard you mention him before. B. GRUMPHY."

'Short and sweet, ole fellow. See you to-night. Attending Mr. Grumphy relative to information required as to owner of the name of Trelawney, six and eightpence,' said Mr. Skeggs, as he scribbled over his pad as though making an entry to that effect. 'What's up now?—what's he want with Trelawney? Why, he's dead long ago. Queer stick that Grumphy! Turn out some day to be somebody, depend on it,—always said so, told Figgins so,—though he is like that person Saint Hiram was telling me of in one of his heavenly discourses,—Methusalem, I think,—that hadn't either a father or mother, and that's why he'll turn out to be some count's son in the West Indies. Any one could see it was in him, he's so domineering,—frowns like a judge, and just as surly,—that's a sure sign, bred in him before he was born, and as they say what's bred in the bone won't come out of the flesh. I s'pose that's because the bone's hardest,—though it does crop out of him at times.'

Mr. Skeggs' visionary propensity was now in full play, and, surrendering himself thereto, the hallucination in reference to Mr. Grumphy's patrician descent became involved and somewhat mixed up with the inquiry contained in his note, and, as a consequence, he was now in the middle of the floor, letter in hand as an imaginary brief, and, in imitation of the learned men with whom he was so familiar, was addressing Mr. Grumphy, transformed into a puisne judge, and assumed to be seated on the stool he had just vacated. 'Who's Trelawney? who's

Trelawney? There you're wrong, my lord, I submit,—decidedly wrong;—a thing that was can't be a thing that is, my lord. By the by,'—struck with the brilliant thought,—'that's a capital idea; where did I get that? Law's a wonderful thing, it's so suggestive. I'll make a note of it for my next speech at our club.' Going round to his pad, he commenced writing it down. '"A thing that wasn't can't be a thing that isn't." That don't sound so well as when I said it spontaneous.—Well, not to detain the court,'—Mr. Skeggs returned to his former position,—'allow me to call your lordship's particular attention to this fact, and to prove it, as also the identity of Trelawney. I shall now proceed to call—Mr. Figgins!—why, how are ye?' exclaimed the learned counsel, as that gentleman entered the office, Octavius having been so engrossed in his special pleadings as not to have been aware of his approach, until he had got inside the door.

'That's it, Tavy; I'm the man to prove that. I know'd him afore you was a span long. Send for me; I'll prove his 'denty. Practisin' law, eh?'

'Ha! ha! ha! glad to see you, Mr. Figgins,' said Skeggs, feeling slightly foolish at being surprised under such circumstances. 'Take a chair, sir. How—how's the family?'

'Oh, she's quite well, an' I'd 'a 'ad a message, on'y she didn't know as I was comin'.'

Mr. Skeggs smiled at Mr. Figgins' innocent transposition of his question, and which showed that he perfectly comprehended in what portion of the family the young gentleman's particular interest lay.

'Got the governor's letter by the tuppenny about an 'our ago, and came hoff post 'aste, an' that's faster nor it come to me. What's up, Tavy?' Deaf Bodkins cum down with the dust at last? Vell, t' ain't too soon. I know'd the governor 'ud make her *repent*, an' bring her to her marrow-bones afore he'd done with her, which he's been rather long a-doin'; but women's stubborn an' hard a-converting.' Here Mr. Figgins chuckled at the intended allusions to the attorney's peculiar style.

'You'll soon be laughing the other side of your mouth,' thought Skeggs, as he faintly smiled.

'An' I'll not forget you,—you'll get your fee, Tavy,' continued Mr. Figgins, 'don't be afeard, which is your due;' but observing the shade upon the other's face, he stopped short, and took to bantering. 'What's a matter this mornin',—disappointed? been to a buryin', eh? Don't take on so. The gal didn't know I were

comin', which I'll not forget next time. You've got a sight to learn, Tavy. I knows by 'sperience it do make a fellow down in the mouth at odd times ven he suspicions and jealousies himself time he's spooneyin'. Vy, you wouldn't 'blieve it now, Tavy, one time I were a whole day and a 'alf,—no, a quarter,—an' I thought I'd never laugh nor smile no more, an' I'll tell you how it 'appened.' He was proceeding to state the occasion of this serious ripple in the course of his true love, when Mr. Hawkes' footstep was heard on the stairs, and Mr. Skeggs, according to precedent, was immediately seated on his stool.

The attorney greeted his client with a graver look than ordinary, that once more suggested to the latter the burying idea, and, bidding Tavy cheer up, he followed the lawyer into his room, but who returned the next minute with Captain Lejette's card, to ascertain from his clerk any further particulars in reference thereto that might have come to his knowledge; but as none had reached that person, after reminding him of this objectionable feature in his professional character, as a lawyer's clerk ought to know everything of interest to his employer, he was directed to prepare his papers, and go at once and put in sham bail, and at the same time take those parchments and powers of attorney to Somerset House to get stamped. As these duties would necessitate Mr. Skeggs' absence from the office the greater part of the day, always hailed with extreme satisfaction, as a respite from his gloomy, irksome confinement, he lost no time in complying with his orders, and was soon on his way to Chancery Lane, arriving at St. Dunstan's Church, at the corner thereof, just as the old clock bell in the niche of the tower was sounding out the hour of eleven, in response to the cudgels of the two fierce-looking figures, who with clockwork regularity were alternately hammering away on either side thereof, to the admiration of juveniles and others, as they had done to those of preceding generations. 'I hear ye, my ancients,' said Mr. Skeggs, as he turned up the lane and entered the archway leading to the Judges' Chambers in Clifford's Inn.

'Here ye are, sir,' said a stout-built, shabbily-dressed man, with a slouched, low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat and belcher neckcloth, as Mr. Skeggs halted under the arch, at the same time exhibiting a dirty card that appeared to be framed into the palm of his hand. 'Take me, sir,' interposed a short-legged, under-sized creature, with greasy coat-sleeves and pant fronts, but whose claims were as quickly contested by two other

applicants, with each of whom Skeggs appeared to be intimate, having frequently availed himself of their services;—indeed, they appeared to be generally known to the numerous attorneys and clerks passing through the entrance at that hour and doing business at the chambers. They evidently had permanent possession of the archway by ancient prescription, as it was beyond the memory of the oldest common law clerk to recall the time when these useful personages, whose services were in general request, did not inhabit it and help to prop up the walls thereof.

The two most importunate, if there was any distinction in that respect, having been selected, with promises to the rest in turn on future occasions, Mr. Skeggs proceeded to the chambers of the sitting Common Pleas Judge, the writ having been issued from that division of judicature, in the name of its chief, Sir Nicholas Conynghan Tyndal Knight, where, according to precedent, he tendered his two reputable and responsible citizens as common bail on behalf of Horatio Lejette, gentleman, late a captain in *one* of Her Majesty's regiments of foot, but which one is left to the decision of those subaltern students of the Army List who may be still living, but have long since retired in disgust, after having become familiar with every name above their own, whose removal or promotion without purchase was hopelessly looked forward to as the door to their own advancement.

The worthy bailsmen were duly sworn by the judge's clerk, whereby they undertook to indemnify the prosecuting tailor in case the said Lejette should fail to appear on being set at liberty; a guarantee for which was set forth by a reference to the value of their possessions (presumably their right in the said archway). At the conclusion thereof, Mr. Skeggs tendered a half-crown to each, as a small acknowledgment of their generous disinterestedness on behalf of one of whom they were entirely ignorant, and likely to remain so; these magnanimous souls only waiting to find out that they could thus ameliorate the unhappy condition of suffering fellow-creatures, to hasten to their relief again and again. Of course, the other side, on being served with a notice thereof, lost no time in taking such steps as would speedily relieve them of their responsibility, this being only another of these ingenious expedients in which the law is so fertile, and so favourable to delay, and that would end in the offer of two more scrupulous and responsible, although not bolder, friends of the incarcerated one, who henceforth would keep the said friends in continual

suspense lest he should become possessed of an uncontrollable mania for travelling to foreign parts.

Mr. Skeggs remained long enough to chat with a few brother clerks, compare notes, and ascertain that *nobody* knew of *anybody* wanting a clerk at a good salary; but obtained promises that when they did they'd let him know, as he informed them confidentially that he knew of *somebody* that such a place would just suit, and then started off to Somerset House. As on all previous occasions, he stopped for a few seconds to take a look at Father Thames emptying his pitcher into the causeway below; after which, as he passed through the courtyard or square, he kept his eye on the dial, or, as he asserted, little timepiece fixed between the bevelled edges of two of the stones in the centre portion of the building, which tradition (if not originating with nursemaids, it was perpetuated by them) accounted for occupying that position in a marvellous manner, it being maintained that a mason, employed on the top of the building, missed his footing, and would have fallen into the area below, but that his watch caught in its present position and held on to him until extricated; though how the watch, and not the seals attached to the chain, got there, and yet continued attached to the man, was never quite clear to Skeggs' apprehension, except on the supposition that he wore the latter in his fob and the former where the seals should have been; a providence so remarkable, that it determined him that if the time ever came when he should own a watch, and chance to be on the top of a building, he would take the precaution to adopt the same plan as a successful expedient for preserving him against the danger attending a like unpremeditated feat. Reflecting on this wonderful incident as he entered the door leading to that portion of the building appropriated as the Stamp Office, Mr. Skeggs' admiration was again called forth, as it had been on several other such occasions; for, seated opposite to the doorway, on an arm-chair that might have held two ordinary-sized mortals, was a man, and such a man! It was some years since Mr. Skeggs, then a mere boy, first ventured into the awe-inspiring presence of that individual,—that is, ventured as near as boys of his shabby appearance dared, who stood in mortal fear of beadles and street-keepers,—and the impressions then made his subsequent familiarity with the object in question could never entirely obliterate. And what further contributed to this, was the fact that he never remembered to have seen the chair vacant, nor the phenomenon seated therein move.

To effect such removal, it always occurred to him, would require one of those machines by which he saw the immense vats and casks hoisted into warehouses. The ponderous head and scarred bluish face rested upon a pair of shoulders that would have done credit to an elephant; his trunk or frame, equally proportionate, was set off by arms and legs each of which was as thick round as Skeggs' whole body, the feet being encased in a pair of slippers of the dimensions of a small Indian canoe, which they somewhat resembled. But what at that early period most impressed the juvenile Skeggs, was the large, splendid scarlet waistcoat that encased his chest and body, braided with gold, over which was suspended a capacious loose coat that must have taken the three renowned tailors of Tooley Street to make, ornamented with numerous brass, or, as he then thought, gold buttons. His first idea was that it was the sovereign of England sitting in state, but which a little later was modified into the conclusion that it was only his image, since it never moved. Time, however, and a maturer acquaintance, transmuted his majesty into the door-keeper; and certainly no sovereign ever had a more faithful one. But whilst the illusion had thus passed away, Mr. Skeggs was never able to resist the impulse that arrested him on his entry into the presence of this wonderful 'specimen of humanity,' under the hope of one day witnessing its effort to rise, but as this had never hitherto occurred, he was fast coming to the conclusion that 'he couldn't do it.' After pausing to make the said inspection, Mr. Skeggs walked up-stairs into the presence of magnates, if not of such imposing appearance, yet of far more importance, as their loud talk and louder laughter indicated, but whose persons, not being so exposed to public gaze, the outsiders were not in so favourable a position to judge of. As a high panelled fence interposed between these invisible functionaries and the common herd who awaited their pleasure in the narrow space allotted to them, they could only be communicated with through a small opening, not much larger than a pigeon-hole, at such times as suited the convenience of the said invisibles to appear thereat, and snatch from some tired hand the printed form that had been filled in and awaited such condescension for the last ten minutes or quarter of an hour. The next minute, perchance, it was thrust back through the same opening, with the information that the papers were wrongly filled in, but impervious to appeals for further information as to where the wrong was,—a course that operated to the advantage of the invisibles, in per-

mitting a prolongation of the account of the previous night's exploits, if not to the *canaille* without, but whose intellects were likely to be sharpened in the unaided task of puzzling out forms apparently composed for the express purpose of baffling the intention of their compilation.

Being conversant with these 'forms' from severe practice, Skeggs, having paid the duties, got through this room in a manner that astonished the majority, one or two of whom thereupon ventured to solicit his assistance, which was cheerfully given. He then descended into a room below, where his 'forms' reappeared, and thereupon, with the documents requiring to be stamped, were transmitted through a wooden tube to a still lower region. Aware it would take some time to affix the stamps, Mr. Skeggs repaired to his friend Grumphy in Catherine Street, being only a little lower down on the other side of the Strand. As he opened the door, he saw Mr. Grumphy coming out of the surgery, and shouted, with a merry chuckle, 'Who's Trelawney? Ha! ha! old fellow, I've got you there.' A frown, accompanied by a twitch of his thumb over his shoulder towards the room he had just left, arrested Mr. Skeggs, and caused him to shrug his shoulders and put out his tongue, following up some grimacial contortions by an application of his fingers to his nose, pointing in the same direction as Mr. Grumphy had done. 'Old Scareum inside?' whispered Skeggs.

'You're a fool,' blurted the assistant, unable to control himself at his friend's opacity; 'he's seen and heard ye.'

'Eh? no!' said Skeggs, with an alarmed look. 'By jingo!' and he looked sideways into the dark room, but without being able to see farther than across the passage; then, observing an increased look of displeasure on Mr. Grumphy's face, he whispered, 'See you again,' and, going out on his toes, closed the door softly, and rapidly made off to the Strand. Disconcerted, and his programme for the next hour thus unexpectedly interfered with, he continued his course to Exeter 'Change, where he stopped to read the bill handed him by the man arrayed after the fashion of the Tower beef-eaters, but declined his pressing invitation to step up-stairs and inspect Cross's Menagerie, containing the most wonderful collection of wild animals in the world, including Chunee, the renowned elephant, and all for the small charge of one shilling, children half-price. Mr. Skeggs next sauntered through the 'Change, stopping to admire the cutlery, toys, and a number of other articles of *vertu*, at the conclusion whereof he

returned to the Stamp Office, and, descending to the basement, where his papers awaited him, thence made his way back to Barge Yard.

On the return of Mr. Hawkes to his room, after giving his instructions to his clerk, he seated himself at his desk without appearing to notice Mr. Figgins, and presently rose and paced the floor, after which he reseated himself, but immediately got up and reached over his table for a bundle of papers; without untying it, he laid it before him, and leaned back in his chair and directed his eyes to the favourite spot in the ceiling.

'Anything a matter, lawyer?' said his client, slightly discomposed by these strange proceedings, and following the attorney's motions until his eyes were fixed on the same object. Mr. Hawkes sighed. 'Got the wobbles, sir?' observed Mr. Figgins. Mr. Hawkes sighed more deeply, and, withdrawing his gaze from the ceiling, bestowed a benevolent look upon his questioner, then, rising to an upright position in his chair, exclaimed in a condoling tone,—

'Mr. Figgins, all flesh is grass.'

'Is it?' said Mr. Figgins, casting an involuntary glance at his hands.

'Sooner or later, Mr. Figgins, all that we possess must belong to others.'

'That's ven ve kicks the bucket, hain't it?' remarked Mr. Figgins, desirous of showing his acquaintance with such serious matters.

'Alas! how many, through others' ill doings, are being deprived of their own long before that even takes place.'

'You may say that! There's that deaf Bodkins, though I call her Mother Bodkins, as it's my belief she's on'y pretending,—none so deaf as them as can 'ear. But what's the noose about the suit, which is what your note said you wanted? Got the coppers?' Mr. Figgins' profane mind was grovelling on worldly things.

'Health of soul and body is above rubies,' continued the lawyer, in the same transcendental state of abstraction, in which state he was about to add some further indisputable aphorisms, but that Mr. Figgins rather interfered therewith by remarking that 'he was thankful to say he was in very good health, and had walked "post haste," which was the way the letter didn't come.' Mr. Figgins must have been under the impression that there was some witticism in this antithetical sentence, from his repeating it,

and indulging in a chuckle at its conclusion. However, it had the effect of disturbing the attorney's meditations, as he looked at Mr. Figgins and inquired what way it did come then, which led to an explanation that quite spoiled the joke.

'No doubt, Mr. Figgins,' resumed the lawyer, endeavouring to get back to his moralizing, 'your Christian *philosophy* has prepared you for everything.'

'Can't say but I do *feel softly* at odd times, 'specially t' other night, arter I'd been to the Wells and seen Georgy Barnvell, which was another skittish 'ooman as did that mischief.' Without attending to this sage confirmation of his surmise, Mr. Hawkes continued,—

'Disappointment's the lot of man, but happily it's only for a brief space. Time is short, Mr. Figgins,—time is short, and eternity is long.'

'Yes, I hoffen says that to myself,—times is short and 'ternally long, which is when you're kept out of your own.' Mr. Figgins' attempt to follow Mr. Hiram was not quite a success, being rather mixed, but he atoned by adding, 'There's no hend o' space.'

'Glad to hear you express yourself with such resignation.'

Mr. Figgins seemed pleased at this approval of his sentiments, uttered without any very special signification; nevertheless he was becoming a little impatient, and so, with the design of changing the theme to one more interesting to himself, he inquired, 'May I ax, Mr. Hawkes, what you're a drivin' at? has it to do with the soot?'

'Ahem!' responded the attorney, 'that reminds me, you got my note.' During his cogitations he had been revolving in what way to introduce the subject, and the idea now occurred to him to so put it that the blame might rest entirely on his client. 'Deception always brings its own punishment, even though it may not have been contemplated.' Then, looking at Mr. Figgins sorrowfully, and slowly shaking his head, he continued, 'How came it that you never told me Mrs. Bodkins was not a *femme sole?*'

Mr. Figgins was puzzled, not at his omission to inform the attorney of anything that he should have done in reference to Mrs. Bodkins, but at the curious words employed in this question, not aware it was the legal phrase for a single or unmarried woman, which in his vernacular would have been expressed as a *lone* woman. It, however, occurred to him that it referred to her

imaginary infirmity, which, he remembered, when first communicated to him, was stated in equally incomprehensible words, and thereupon rejoined, 'Cos I didn't know it myself, and if it's true, it's took place since the soot.'

'Ah!' said the attorney, quite revived by the information, 'since the suit, you think, eh?'

'Yes; she warn't deaf when'—

'Deaf! nonsense! what puts that into your head? I'm not speaking about deafness, Mr. Figgins,—that's trifling. I ask you, sir, why you did not inform me that Mrs. Bodkins was Mrs. Bodkins, or, in other words, not a widow, but a *femme couverte*.'

'Not a vidder,' muttered Mr. Figgins, endeavouring to take hold of the other word,—'not a vidder, but a—a—dam coovert;—and so she is,' said he emphatically, throwing his hat on the ground and striking his fist on his knee; 'and that's what, speaking plain Hinglish, you may just call her, Mr. Hawkes, a dam'—

'Mr. Figgins, I protest against your using such language in my presence, much more implying that I uttered such wicked words.'

Figgins looked dazed, picked up his hat, and, throwing it on to the table, exclaimed with some warmth, 'Then I'd like to know what you did say?'

'I would feel obliged, sir, if you would *attend* to what I say,' said the attorney with equal warmth. 'Did you know that Mrs. Bodkins was a married woman?'

'Sartinly, I know'd,—I know'd she were Mrs. Bodkins.'

'And did you know that at the time she came to your shop to purchase goods?'

'Sartinly. But mind ye, I never took any advantage of it; if she says I did, it's a whacker,—that's all.' Mr. Figgins was becoming nervous, anticipating some serious charge from a woman he now believed capable of anything.

'Then if you knew Mrs. Bodkins had a husband, why didn't you tell me?'

A sudden light seemed to flash across Figgins' brain, as he passed his fingers through his whiskers. The tables were turned, so, looking at the lawyer, who, he assumed, had got into some scrape through his ignorance of the state of matters, he winked knowingly, and said in a lowered tone, 'Did you want to know?'

'You'll please to conduct yourself with propriety,' said the scandalized attorney. 'Want to know? Of course I did; and because I did not know, and because you did not inform me

thereof, we—that is, you—have lost the suit, that is all. If clients will keep back anything from their legal advisers,—will conceal the truth,—they must take the consequences. "The truth, the whole truth, Mr. Figgins, and anything—that is, nothing—but the truth," is the beautiful foundation upon which our whole judicature is raised.' The attorney felt considerably relieved by this vindication of the profession at large, covering as it would his own character, as well as a secret satisfaction at having so adroitly thrown the onus of failure upon his client, who, not having studied the great difference between *sole* and *couverte*, was, in application thereof to his customer, making the late discovery that it was not always bliss to be ignorant, nor folly to be wise.

During the further explanation to his client of the state of the case, Figgins listened in mute astonishment, comprehending little more than that the suit was lost, which he considered quite enough to know, but which he was yet more fully to understand, and that to his cost, as predicted by Mr. Skeggs in his late soliloquy.

Simply stated, the facts may be summarized thus. On recommencing the suit, as permitted by the judge after the former failure (never, however, communicated by Mr. Hawkes to his client), the attorney on the other side discovered Mrs. Bodkins had a husband living, though where residing, for explainable reasons, at that present unknown; and thereupon pleaded *couverture*, to the surprise of Mr. Hawkes, whose legal experience (as also the attorney's on the other side, equally at fault) should have caused him to make the inquiry before commencing proceedings. The suit had consequently fallen through, with the satisfactory result of losing the debt, unless the husband should turn up at any future time, and saddling Mr. Figgins with costs on both sides.

Upon recovering from the stunning effect of this information, Mr. Figgins deliberately rose from his seat, and, with as much calmness of manner as he could assume, stated that 'it was his intention to see the whole kit of 'em hanged, and swing himself, too, afore he'd pay a farthing.' But as the lawyer assured him it was not a hanging matter, his provident country having provided a special retreat for all such recusants, Mr. Figgins' mind, after contemplating the alternative, became somewhat reassured, and he might have left Mr. Hawkes' office in a more settled state, but, happening to inquire what the amount of costs would be, he became so excited upon the attorney naming

the probable amount on both sides, more than quadrupling the original debt, that, notwithstanding his capacious chest and lungs, he had very nearly lost all his breath. As soon, however, as he could reply, with a compressed lip and savage eye he demanded of the attorney 'if he thought he were going to be such a hass as to pay that?' and, without waiting a reply, exclaimed, 'Don't you wish you may get it?—yes, hover the left. Mark my words,—not for all the demmy-she-coos, as you call 'em, in Lunnun;' and with that he picked up his hat, that he had thrown on the ground in verification of his resolve, and strode over to the door, the handle of which came off, in the desperate manipulation of the now wrathy individual in his endeavour to open it. He threw the knob from him, thereby causing Mr. Hawkes to dodge, and, lifting his foot, sent the door flying open, and on arrival at the outer door pulled at it with equal violence, and went stamping down the stairs into the yard, where, hurrying past Winkles as that person was carrying a case on his porter's knot, he nearly upset him by the force with which they came in contact, but continued his course regardless of the latter's remonstrance.

After many similar mishaps during his passage through Cheapside to Fleet Market, in which his speed had somewhat exhausted his temper by exhausting his wind, he was wending his way down that broad side-walk, when a muffled sound arrested his attention, and, as he stopped to listen, the sound was repeated, and a voice was heard through the narrow grating of the Fleet Prison, that he had been at that moment passing, 'Please remember the poor debtors.' Mr. Figgins was moved; he approached the iron bars, and, looking through, saw the outline of an apparently old man. Back came his thoughts to the scene he had just gone through. Strange humanity! he had passed that window and heard that cry scores of times before, and it had never affected him. Now a tear got into the corner of one of his large eyes. Was it that there was something more plaintive in the tremulous accents of the old man whose turn it was this day to plead his own and fellow-prisoners' wants?—possibly. Possibly, as he peered within, the dim outline of the old man's person was assuming a more familiar shape, and he was thinking of 'Figgins as might soon be.' He coughed down the emotion, fumbled for a silver coin, dropped it in the box, and passed on.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AN EVENING WITH THE FIGGINSES.

ON Mr. Figgins' arrival at his shop in Wapping, after the completion of the business that took him to the neighbourhood of Fleet Street, his mind had become so diverted by the variety of objects that had engaged his attention on his road, that it was not until seated in the little back room, after closing his place of business, that he had time to recall the morning's adventure; when, as he sat for a short time left to his own meditations, the matter gradually presented itself to him in its irritating aspects.

As has already appeared, there were seasons when Mr. Figgins contented himself with informing his wife of his proceedings after the facts, when he was by no means the gainer, seeing Mrs. Figgins had a much more practical mind than her husband, and a more common-sense way of treating ordinary matters. But however rare the occasion of his not availing himself of her advice beforehand, there was no exception to his according her the peculiar privilege of assisting him out of a difficulty after its occurrence, and thereby affording her the opportunity of stating what her advice would have been. But this inverse order usually operated as a further provocation to Mr. Figgins, who deemed it 'very easy to say them things now it was done, but why didn't she tell him afore?'

Mrs. Figgins was, of course, too conversant with her husband's peculiar temperament not to be aware that one of those seasons had occurred when her services were again likely to be in request, and her assistance needed to extricate him from some fresh dilemma, but, having less patience than ordinarily, was unable to await the relation of the circumstances; which, as shown by her tact on a former occasion, would have been the wiser course, as it would have deprived him of the satisfaction of a further

grievance, in making it appear that she had been 'insinivating' until she got it out of him; whilst, had she had patience, she would have learnt all from his own voluntary although not very direct statement.

This time, however, Mr. Figgins had come to the resolution of keeping it to himself. 'What did she want to know about such things? she warn't no lawyer, and, 'sides, it warn't no manner of use a-making the 'ouse miserable on haccount of a poor hunfort'nit like him.' 'I'm hallus misfortunate,' continued Mr. Figgins, as he sat musing in his chair. 'If I buys a parrot, it turns heut as he's blind of one eye, it do. If I goes to 'elp a sailor whiles being mauled by a crimp, I gets a crack for my pains. An' ven I tells her anything, don't she taunt me? What did she say ven she was mending that tare the dog made in my breeches, which the young voman's pals set on me arter I'd seed her 'ome, cos she wur muddled, poor thing?—didn't she say as it served me right for meddling with young vimmen?' And thus Mr. Figgins was proceeding to enumerate some of the ills to which, being 'flesh and blood,' he was 'heir to,' when Mrs. Figgins interposed, and, after the usual perseverance and forbearance, despite his resolve, obtained some clue to this last predicament in which her husband was placed,—not, however, without being somewhat posed. Matters were not quite so clear to her apprehension as on other occasions, Mr. Figgins' mode of alluding to the legal bearings rather tending to complicate than otherwise, and whereupon her worthy spouse returned to his original idea 'that she warn't no lawyer;' though it was a question if he was a much wiser one, or understood the matter a whit better.

'Why did he put it to the law, if he couldn't make her pay?' suggested Mrs. Figgins.

'Ah, there now, you show some sense,—which is what I says.'

'Did you say that to him before he began?'

'Say that afore he began?' Mr. Figgins considered a moment, and, anticipating his want of precaution in this respect might bring his good lady down on him, he replied testily, 'Now, what do that signify? he know'd his own business, didn't he?'

'Then when he began, why didn't he go on and get the money? what made him stop?'

'What made 'im stop? Ah! of course, there you've hit it. What made he stop? cos he's a jackdaw, an' no 'torney, an' which he's nothing but a psalm-singing wagabone.' Mr. Figgins

was working himself into the same wrathful state in which he left the lawyer's office. 'For to go to tell me he lost the soot, cos she's a—a what-ye-ca'-'m?—a—a dem-she-soul, and cos'— Mr. Figgins was arrested in his discourse by the horrified look of his wife, who had raised her hands in deprecation of Mr. Figgins' strange language. She had seen and heard him in temporary fits of anger do and say things not usual in his calmer moments, but until this instant she never remembered to have heard him utter a word that sounded like an oath, and now to couple two such dreadful words,—it took her breath away, and she regarded him with a bewildered look. To do him credit, Mr. Figgins himself had some doubts as to the propriety of repeating such words, but then Mr. Hawkes, who repudiated as much as himself all idea of swearing, had uttered them; but the alarmed appearance of his wife renewed his suspicions, and caused him to feel quite uncomfortable.

'Mr. Figgins,' at length exclaimed the indignant woman, 'is that the language you pick up on the streets, to use before your wife and family?' but the next moment, conscious of the embarrassment of her husband, and impressed with the thought that the effect of his interview with the lawyer had been to unhinge his mind, she changed her tone, and exclaimed, 'Figgins, love, it's been too much for you; it's turning your head, it 'll make you crazy.'

'Crazy!'—the word restored Mr. Figgins; he could not stand an imputation of that serious nature,—'Crazy! who's crazy, Mrs. Wiseacre, I'd like to know?'

'My dear man, don't let it worry you, it isn't worth it. She's not worth it. She's a'— Mrs. Figgins was at a loss for a word to correctly convey her idea of the estimation in which Mrs. Bodkins was to be held, without at the same time sanctioning her husband's indecorous terms. Seeing she hesitated, and under the impression that this time she was herself endeavouring to recall the obnoxious words, he came to her assistance and added, 'A dem soul.'

'O heavens!' shrieked Mrs. Figgins, 'was there ever such blasphemy? O Figgins, you're a lost man! O Mrs. Bodkins, Mrs. Bodkins, I wish, I wish you were at the bottom of the Thames!'

Mr. Figgins felt a strong desire to substitute a warm and drier place, but whether from the direction his thoughts had taken, or the confusion consequent thereon, the enigmatical words again

rose to his lips, and, before he could restrain himself, he had hurled them after Mrs. Bodkins, whilst she might be presumed to be descending to the place assigned her by his wife.

Mrs. Figgins sank into her seat the image of despair, where she sat, her eyes fastened on the unfortunate Figgins, awaiting the next phase of his lunacy, but the only result was that he closed his eyes, unable to bear her piercing gaze. After a few hysteric catches in her breath, Mrs. Figgins fairly broke down, and, burying her head in her hands, gave way to a fit of crying. This was too much for her worthy husband, who thereupon rose from his seat, paced the room, blew his nose, and at the conclusion put his arm around her neck, and, begging her to desist, assured her 'he wasn't crazed, an' he didn't b'lieve they were wicked words, else Piety Hawkes wouldn't 'a' used 'em;' which was very comforting to Mrs. Figgins, the more so as she was again and again assured that the expression was by no means original, but merely a term by which lawyers called women as were spliced or unspliced, he didn't 'zactly know which, and meant he didn't quite know what, but not what Mrs. Figgins meant.

It was not long before things settled down to their ordinary state, the worthy couple undertaking not to recur to the unpleasant occasion of their temporary misunderstanding; and, as the evening closed in, the whole family were happily congregated, as was their wont, in their little back parlour, around which the bright faces of children and the warm glow of a blazing fire shed their exhilarating influence, for though living long in Wapping, and thence, it might be presumed, having some predilections in favour thereof, Mrs. Figgins was of the opinion that it might be much improved, especially after the lamps were lighted, and therefore not a place affording great facilities for the advancement of the young Figgins' minds if permitted to perambulate it after dark, and in consequence they were not indulged with any such permission. In this feature of the idiosyncrasy of an Englishman in Mr. Figgins' station of life, he was thoroughly English, and exemplified M. Taine's conception thereof, who asserts that 'his happiness consists in being at home at six in the evening, with a pleasing, attached wife, having four or five children on their knees, and respectful domestics;' though the last particular was not applicable, unless we refer it to a domesticated cat, who was accustomed to dispute possession with the younger members of the family of one of Mr. Figgins' knees.

At the conclusion of their evening meal, a rush was made for

the coveted spare knee, on which Benny, being the succe candidate, was quickly astride, 'riding to Banbury Cross, tc an old woman get top of a horse;' whilst Toddles was standir the back rail of the chair, her arms around daddy's neck, tug and suspending herself thereby until he stood some chanc being throttled. Jake, being too big for such play, was rel with great glee to his mother some of the more prominent ev in his day's proceedings, principally transacted during his sc play-hours; at the conclusion of which, by way of compens for her attention, Jake had to endure some counsel and ad from his watchful parent, employed in overhauling the state condition of certain portions of the dilapidated family wea apparel, interlarded with an occasional caution to the other little ones, both of whom were by this time in rivalry for coveted cuddle, not to kill poor father.

During the incessant chatter and noise of the foregoing, Aral was vainly endeavouring to get through another chapter of *Children of the Abbey*, obtained from 'the circulating libr round the corner, at a penny a volume, the contents of w library consisted principally of *Paul Jones*, *Humphrey Cli The Castle of Otranto*, and a few other volumes of a kin character. As a last hope of being able to shut out the n she had covered her ears with her hands; observing which, J unable to resist the temptation, attempted the introductio the feather end of a quill between her fingers into her thereby compelling the young lady to desist from that mode, finally to abandon and lay aside the book altogether, announ her intention of reading it after she had retired to bed,—and set the house on fire, as Mr. Figgins added, but which controverted by the reminder that she had never done so ye

'Bell,' said Mr. Figgins, stroking the cat's head (the chil having retired to the hearth-rug for a little *tête-a-tête*), as animal rose from his disturbed sleep, and projected his back tail by way of a stretch, and then jumped to the ground to the boy and girl, 'did ye give Tom any wittles to-night?'

'V, pa,—victuals.'

'Vell, then, vittles, to please ye. Did ye?'

'Yes, I gave him some, but I'll give him a little milk;' forthwith she proceeded to the cupboard, a movement with w Tom seemed quite familiar, and immediately followed u running thereto mewing, and, on completion of the well-li saucer, returned to the rug, where he went through the pr

of washing his face and paws, to the continued admiration of Figgins, senior, who, as the little ones began to interfere therewith, requested them not to teaze the 'wagabone.'

'V, pa,—vagabond.'

'Vell, vwagobones, if you like;' whereat the children tittered, and Jake exclaimed,—

'That ain't it, father! wagsabone!'

Then the three giggled, and kept repeating Jake's version, and going off into a fresh burst, until Mrs. Figgins interposed, and reminded them that little people shouldn't make fun at the expense of their mothers, intending thereby to avoid the idea that anybody else was concerned in it, but which she had some difficulty in preventing their disclaiming, and, as they said, putting the saddle on the right horse.

'I'm a-thinking, my dear,' said Mr. Figgins, addressing his wife, but abstractedly watching Tom's actions, 'of that old shecat.'

'Tom ain't a she,' said little Benny, looking up at his father.

'Who are you speaking about, my dear,' replied Mrs. Figgins.

'Deaf Bodkins, to be sure.' It was very hard to get out of Figgins' head what had got such a permanent lodgment there. 'I wunner what's her dodge for that. D'ye think, now, as she's really lost her 'earing?'

'Where did she lose it, father?' said Jake, jumping up from the rug on which he had just seated himself, with the intention of teasing Tom or the little ones. 'I'll look for it.'

'What's that to you, boy? I'm speaking to your mother.'

'Cos I'd look for 't, and if I found it I'd make her pay me.'

'What's the boy talking on? How'd you ever find a woman's 'earing.'

Jake was about to explain how, when Miss Figgins interfered, and informed him that papa meant hearing.

'Of coorse I do; what helse would I mean? I mean what I says, don't I?'

'When did she get deaf, my dear?' interposed Mrs. Figgins mildly, fearful he might again lose his temper on so perilous a subject.

'That's what I wants to know, and which is what I'm a-saying, ain't it? I think you're all deaf.'

'None so deaf as them as won't hear,' said Jake, looking over at his mother, who thereupon frowned, and said, 'Little boys should not listen to or hear what's not said to them.'

'Deaf as a post,' said Jake, unable to resist, at the same time covering his ears with his hands,—a proceeding that was immediately imitated by Ben and Toddles, and in a trice, amused at the broken sound produced as their hands closed and opened upon their little auricles, the three were rapidly repeating, 'Deaf as a post—deaf as a post—deaf as a post!'

'Oh!' shouted Jake, as a hand, considerably larger and harder than his own, was applied to one of his ears, followed by the instant scattering of the trio, as well as Tom, whose tail being trodden on in the *melée* caused him to cry out too, and retreat simultaneously with the rest.

'Now you'll sing deaf as a post, will ye!' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, looking after Jake as he stood rubbing his ear at a safe distance; whilst the other two, under the table, were using frantic efforts to smother their laughter at Jake's discomfiture.

'It's time them children was a-bed,' said Mr. Figgins.

'Law, pa, it's early yet, and I like to see them about,' remonstrated Mrs. Figgins.

'Then vy don't they behave?'

'Oh, it's only childish sport, they're so full of humour; we were the same once.'

'Are they?' said Mr. Figgins, beginning to relent, and even feel pleasant at this way of putting it; then stretched out his legs, and threw back his head, and endeavoured to recollect if he was ever like them. But all he could recall—because, as he observed, it made a strong impression on him at the time—was, that on any symptoms of such humour appearing, his loving parent usually resorted to 'strap ointment,' and, to prevent any outbreak, he jocosely added, 'generally waxinated the whole kit of us.'

As this little reminiscence set them all laughing, it would have acted as a complete emollient to Mr. Figgins' temper, had not Miss Arabella thoughtlessly remarked on the substitution of the v for the w, the orthography of the word 'vaccinate' requiring it, as she asserted.

'Now,' remonstrated Mr. Figgins, with whom it was not usual to dispute his daughter's corrections, and therefore a token that his temper was in an abnormal state, 'I'm sure that don't sound right: how could hanyone whack with a v?' He looked over at his wife with an air of triumph.

Mrs. Figgins assented, and looked deprecatingly at Arabella, who, comprehending the state of affairs, left him to enjoy his

imaginary triumph, and, by way of reparation for her inopportune interference, remarked, as she overhauled the hose lying on the table, 'how easy pa was on stockings to what Jake was, and that there wasn't a button off one of his shirts; which, together with a few other such remarks, had the effect of restoring that individual so completely, that before long he was off into a not unusual strain of felicitation in being blessed with such an old woman, and such a baggage of a daughter, adding, with uxorial warmth, 'that the man as got Bell would get as great a prize as he, for it was his opinion she'd make as good a 'ousekeeper as her mother, whose beat there wasn't in Wappin', though he said it as shouldn't.'

As these assertions called up approving smiles and sundry pleasant ejaculations on the part of the ladies, they were continued until, becoming very funny and pointed in reference to the junior and a third party, the young lady jumped up from her seat, and, planting herself on his knee, made desperate efforts to seize him by the whiskers, in which she finally succeeded, and thereupon proceeded to rate him as being 'a naughty, good-for-nothing old pa, to go on talking in that way about wives and husbands; if I don't pay you out, you see!' and, still holding him by the whiskers, she commenced smothering his face with kisses, at the conclusion whereof, releasing her hold, the quizzing parent returned them with interest, Mrs. Figgins in the meantime looking on with delight, scarcely able to restrain the children from joining in, until, observing symptoms of his shirt-front—which was a 'dickey' over a coloured shirt—making its appearance on the outside of his waistcoat, she interposed, and suggested 'that was enough,—there would be none left for her;' whereat both stopped, and, drawing their breath, and rearranging dickey, collars, and other small articles, Miss Bella returned to her seat, not omitting on her way thereto to bestow a few hearty kisses on her mother's cheek, but who playfully desired her 'to be off with her pretences, for she knew very well she did not care for any one but her old pa,—an assertion that made the old boy laugh and feel proud; but, recollecting herself, she looked over to him, and, winking, added, 'and somebody else,' to which he as knowingly responded. Thereupon a blush spread over the cheek of the young lady, and she threatened a fresh demonstration, this time on both, if they were not immediately quiet; but which, Mr. Figgins intimated, if she attempted, she would not get off so easily, further adding, in reference to Mrs. Figgins' remark, that

'the somebody' alluded to was disappointed this morning, which immediately elicited the demand, 'How did he know? Who told him? and Where did he see anybody?' to which questions no other reply could be got than that a little bird told him,—a remark that once more set the children off, their curiosity being aroused to know if it was the parrot, but which Toddles sagaciously suggested 'couldn't be, cos she'd only one eye,' but being immediately silenced, their intended pleasantry concluded, and the two smaller children sidled round to their father's parlour, as they termed the space between his stout legs, and were lifted on to his knees, their possession thereof not being this time disputed by Tommy. In a few minutes, their little tired heads resting on his breast, they were sound asleep; observing which, Arabella rose, and, kneeling in front of them, unlaced their boots and drew them off, together with their socks, hanging the latter over the fender to dry out the dampness; after which she woke them up and led them off to bed, but not before they had run back to kiss and bid a 'good-night, God bless you' in concert with their parents, and received a reminder from Mrs. Figgins to say their prayers before getting into bed.

'Fine, good gal that! a prize for some one. She houghter get a carriage and four, she hought,' remarked Mr. Figgins, as the door closed.

'She'll be happier if she gets one like her father,' said Mrs. Figgins, without any idea of flattery.

Mr. Figgins coughed, and then remarked, 'We hain't nothin' to complain on. I loves to 'ear their little voices; an' then there's allers been somethin' to put in their mouths, though we're not desarvin'; but, howsomever, ven God gives, He doesn't ask whose son are you.' Mr. Figgins was quoting a Servian proverb, though not in the precise words of the original. 'There's some as gets more than they desarve, though. There's that Mother Bodkins;'—Mr. Figgins stopped short as he caught an expostulatory look from his better half. 'Well, we'll let her pass for once; if we all got our deserts I dunno vere we'd pull up.' Thereupon the moralizing Figgins fell into a brown study, interrupted only by the reappearance of Arabella, who stepped up quietly to Jake, seated at the table with his fingers in his ears, intent on getting his spelling-lesson off by heart, and demanded if he did not think it was time for him to retire too, as he ought to know his lessons before then; but which interference the boy resented by replying pettishly, 'O yes, I know; cos you want

to get me out of the way,'—an amount of knowledge his sister did not appear to think desirable, and certainly not obtained from books.

'Jake,' said his mother, 'don't speak that way.'

'Well, how can a fellow learn anything that's talked to?'

'Jake,' said Mr. Figgins, 'don't hanswer your mother; it's time you was in bed. Get hup in the morning and learn the rest.'

'There ain't time to.'

'Hain't time to? No, that's cos you lay too long. Get up as I do. Ven I gets up the milkmen are going by.'

'Well, I ain't a milkman,' retorted the pouting boy.

'Go to bed, Jake, there's a good boy,' interposed his mother, in response to an appealing look from Arabella, as well as to cut short any further controversy between father and son; whereupon, closing his book with a snap, he took up the flat candlestick, and shook his head, muttering some indistinct words intended for his sister, and left the room, but turned and put his head in at the door to say good-night in a lumpy way, and then disappeared.

'Bell, shut the door, dear; there's a draught,' said Mr. Figgins.

'Oh, pa, it's too close,' remonstrated Miss Figgins; but, finding her father dissented from her opinion, she appealed to her mamma if she did not find it too warm, which that lady was also about to disclaim, when, enlightened by her naturally quick intuitions in certain matters where men are generally more obtuse, she replied, looking over to her husband for his approbation, that 'she thought if the door was shut a little closer, just sufficient to let in a little fresh air, it might do;' which suggestion, no opposition being offered, was complied with, the room put into order and the hearth swept up, after which Miss Figgins re-seated herself at the table and resumed her book.

A silence ensued, during which Mr. Figgins sat steadily gazing into the fire, the effect of which was that, after a few nods and rolls of his head from side to side, a sound, not vocal but nasal, announced that he had surrendered to its somnific influence. Nor was Mrs. Figgins quite proof to the same influence, for though she held out, unwilling to yield, with how much better success was seen in the singular erratic movements of her needle, at one time in this direction and at another in that, as she perseveringly endeavoured to pass it through the heel of the stock-

ing she was mending for Jake, but on each attempt keeping wide of the mark.

'What's that?' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, as he woke up and rubbed his face with the palm of his hand, and drew his fingers through his side hair to make sure he was awake. Aroused by the same cause, Mrs. Figgins thrust the needle through the stocking-heel into her hand, thereby effectually dissipating her drowsiness, and looked over at her husband, who was awaiting her solution of the cause of the disturbance. 'What was it, Bell?' demanded her father, observing the young lady was hurriedly lighting a candle.

'Nothing, pa, only a knock at the door,' said the young lady, as she disappeared from the room with the light, in her haste omitting to shut the door close. A sound of unbolting and unlocking, followed by the entrance of some person and a re-closing the street-door, ensued; then a rustling as of a great-coat being taken off and hung up, after which a whisper; another slight rustle, succeeded by a sound, repeated more than once, as though chirruping to a bird,—no, not that either, it was more like,—well, it's not easy to say what it was like; it was peculiar,—not peculiar to passages except under certain and similar conditions; but whatever it was, it thoroughly woke up Mr. Figgins, who looked over at Mrs. Figgins astounded, and exclaimed, 'What was that?' to which demand, however, that excellent woman, equally perplexed, seemed unable to afford any explanation.

'Was it'—said Mr. Figgins, leaning his hands on his chair and half rising, and then letting himself down again. 'No, it wasn't, it couldn't be.'

Mrs. Figgins shook her head, and thought too 'it could not be.'

'If you think it was,' said Mr. Figgins, regarding her sternly, and compressing his lips as though endeavouring to repress some severe sentence.

'O no,' said Mrs. Figgins remonstratively; 'she'd never.'

'If I thought for one moment.'

'Bless me, Figgins, I'm astonished at you,—how could you?' The next moment the door opened widely, and in walked Miss Figgins, followed by Mr. Skeggs, both looking so demure, so innocent, that Mrs. and Mr. Figgins became at once reassured, and by intelligent looks came mutually to the one conclusion 'that it couldn't be,' and thereupon welcomed the

new arrival with their usual heartiness. As Mr. Skeggs declared he was not at all cold,—on the contrary, quite warm with walking, —he declined the invitation to sit round the fire, and accordingly took a seat by the side of the young lady at the table, but had hardly done so before Tom, having rubbed and purred around his legs, jumped on his lap, and, in response to his caresses, stood on his hind legs and commenced rubbing his head against his cheeks, until, seeing possibly that he was engrossing too much of Octavius' attention, Miss Figgins insisted upon his getting down.

'What's up, Mr. Skeggs?' interposed Mr. Figgins.

'Nothing particular, sir,' replied the gentleman addressed, at the same time wondering if the question had any particular reference to his appearance there.

'No news? What about that 'ere Bodkins?—pretty mess you've gone an' made of that 'ere business atween ye. I tell ye what, Skeggs, if I thought as how—which is what I don't—you had a hand in that, you'd never darken them doors agen.' Figgins' face flushed, and he was getting warm.

'Pa, consider!' 'Figgins, dear!' chimed in the two ladies together.

'I'm very sorry, Mr. Figgins,' said Skeggs, feeling rather uncomfortable at this outburst. 'I can't express to you how sorry I am.'

'Can't hexpress! an' are you both a-goin' to let her jew me in that way? Then I say you hain't; an' hif you do, there's a pair of you, that's all.' Mr. Figgins rose, re-seated himself, crossed his legs, and struck the arm of his chair with his fist.

The ladies once more interfered, and remonstrated with the irate man, reminding him that 'Mr. Skeggs couldn't help it;' to which Mrs. Figgins added a further reminder 'that he was only the clerk,'—a palliative, however, that gentleman did not quite appreciate, preferring some less disparaging apology, and was about in some way to impress on his kind apologist that he was not quite the cipher she had unintentionally made him out to be, but that a look from Arabella restrained him; whilst Mr. Figgins, checked by the dual appeal, contented himself by muttering 'that it was 'ard he warn't hallowed to speak in his hown 'ouse,' which breaches of orthographical pronunciation Miss Figgins wisely allowed to pass unnoticed, and by way of resenting this unjustifiable interdiction, Mr. Figgins determined to say no more, but, covering his head over with his handkerchief,

was soon in another doze, dreaming of the hardships he had just been subject to.

'Oh, I'd forgot; I thought I'd been in time to see the children;' and thereupon Mr. Skeggs pulled out of his pocket a paper of bull's-eyes and peppermint drops, and laid them on the table. Mr. Skeggs was fond of children, as they were of him, which Mrs. Figgins declared to be a good sign, as dogs and children, and cats too—witness Tom—always knew a good man.

As the conversation soon became more restricted, confined to the two younger ones, it was not long before Mrs. Figgins relapsed into the same condition as prior to Skeggs' arrival, which afforded him and Miss Figgins an opportunity of carrying on a flirtation, or rather in whispering innuendoes to refer to visions of an Elysian state not far in the future, and though without the remotest intention of an allusion to the millennium, yet too ethereal, too blissful, to be ever realized in so earthly a sphere as this, or by creatures heir to so much of ill, and with the deliciousness of which a few years would bitterly interfere. But why anticipate, or rob such moments as the happy lovers were now sharing of their transient radiance? To them it was the dawn of all that was lovely, shedding its first halo over a cloudless sky. What though below the western margin there lingers a little cloud no bigger than a hand? in the light of the beautiful sunshine, as it first peeps above the horizon, it is but the harbinger of abundance. And so they revel on, luxuriating in the golden prospect, nor dream of its spread, nor of the gathering of other clouds that follow in quick succession, until the roll of thunder and flash of lightning awake, with a resounding crash, to stern realities. But whilst such mellifluous days are speeding past, hinder not their enjoying, but 'freight them with love,' and then *all* will not have been cloud: there are shadows because there are lights.

With such thoughts and sensuous drapings of the future, the evening passed too swiftly, and hours—which seemed as minutes—would have continued unnoted, but that the little clock in the shop struck ten, and warned the young gentleman of the fleetness with which his temporary bliss had flown. Returning to his earthly thinkings, he intimated to Arabella that he must go; but as this occasioned a remonstrance on the part of the young lady for a delay of five minutes, he re-seated himself for that space.

The slight disturbance occasioned by this movement had been

sufficient to recall both Mrs. and Mr. Figgins to a state of wakefulness, when the latter, as he pulled the handkerchief off his face in a high state of perspiration, looked about the room, as though endeavouring to realize that he was still in the attorney's office in pursuance of his dream, and which Skeggs' presence seemed to confirm. At length satisfied by a remark from his daughter of his whereabouts, he addressed her lover,—

'Skeggs, I've 'ad a shadderin'.'

'Yes, sir, saw you was asleep.'

'No, I warn't. I were thinkin' with my eyes shut; but I've a shadderin', Mr. Skeggs.' He lowered his voice and looked at him solemnly,—'All's not right;' and then he looked at Arabella, and repeated the words in the same tone and manner.

'Dear me!' said Mr. Skeggs, looking at Arabella and then at her father, a faint suspicion rising that there was probably some reference in these words to his intentions towards the former; 'I hope nothing serious.'

'Yes, there is; I've a shadderin'. That is—what d'ye call it, Bell, which is ven you sees a thing as you don't know of afore it comes?'

'Presentiment, do you mean, pa?'

'Oh, ah! a percentagement! Tavy,'—he paused, and looked more solemn,—'I've seen my best, my 'appiest day. Good-night, Mr. Skeggs.' Saying which, he took up the candlestick, lit the candle, and went up-stairs to bed.

'What can be the matter with pa? what makes him talk in that way?' said Arabella, troubled at the strange and unusual manner of her father.

'Oh, nothing, only he's been a little more worried to-day than usual,' observed her mother, endeavouring to make light of what had equally disturbed herself.

Mr. Skeggs said nothing, unable to rid himself of a corresponding feeling, and, after one or two ineffectual attempts to rally the two ladies, he retired, but not before a recurrence of the same mysterious sounds in the passage had taken place, but which, under the altered circumstances, did not excite the same attention.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TRAPPING AND TRAPPED.

'DID you call, sir?' said Octavius Skeggs, as he put his head inside the attorney's door.

'No; when I want you I *will* call.'

Mr. Skeggs closed the door, evidently disappointed, but immediately re-opened it, Mr. Hawkes having said something just as he did so. 'Bring another candle.'

Without replying, Mr. Skeggs pulled the door to with an extra tug, and then exclaimed, 'Here's a go! another candle—another! —O yes! and night-cap too. Don't you want a night-cap, Mr. Piety, and a blanket to cover your blessed carcase? I'd like to give you a wet 'un. If it ain't too bad!' At that moment the clock at the Exchange struck. 'One, two, three, four, five,—there's six,' said Octavius, counting each stroke; 'and I was to meet Arabella at the corner of the Minories, to see her home. It's too bad, 'pon my word it is!' He stood contemplating as much of the opposite side of the yard as could be seen through his dirty window. 'Not a light in one of their offices; all shut but this hole. It's too bad! Well, I'm not going to stand it, that's all about it.' An angry shout from the inner room recalled him to himself, and shouting in reply, 'Coming, sir!' he set about executing the order with great speed, but in his hurry broke the candle in the middle, whilst forcing it into the socket, which necessitated his cutting it in two with his penknife, and placing the piece therein. As he endeavoured to light it, it spluttered and spit, as though, equally with Skeggs, resenting the attempt at such an hour, but in reality the result of its having been extinguished, on the last occasion of its use, with wet fingers. 'Now, ain't that provoking? Always when one's in a hurry, that's the way.' Then, shading the intermitting light with his hand as he opened the door, the draught blew it out. Mr. Skeggs would

probably have made two or three comments on this additional provocation, but that Mr. Hawkes saved him the trouble by making some reflections instead, having reference to his awkwardness and sluggish movements.

'Blame him!' thought Mr. Skeggs, on his return to his own room. 'He religious! ain't that like it?—keep a chap after his time,—when he's got an engagement, too! He a saint! A real one would say, "Mr. Skeggs, you can go." Oh, but that would be wicked, and he'd be afraid of injuring my morals.' These and other diverting thoughts, equally flattering in their application to the subject thereof, passed through Mr. Skeggs' mind, whilst sulkily enduring his inopportune detention, thereby adding another confirmation to the correctness of Boileau's remark, 'That the defects of men always pass before the eyes of those whom they keep waiting.'

As he had fully made up his mind that he would not do a *scratch* more, he resumed his contemplations at the window, on which he traced the outlines of a profile that for beauty might have passed for Mr. Hawkes, or Winkles, or his own, even, especially in the nasal projection; but as it suggested the lines of a ditty then popular, it must have been intended for some one less masculine, for during its progress he was humming to a well-known tune, the words,—

> 'O 'tis love, 'tis 'love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!
> I only wish a friend in Bish, and thirty thousand pound.'

After having repeated these words a few times, not being able to recall the next lines of the parody, he fell into a train of thought, in which he had become the owner of a fractional part of a sixteenth share of a lottery ticket, that turned up to be a prize to a fabulous amount; the occasion of all this being that the said Bish, mentioned in the foregoing lines, was the proprietor of a renowned lottery, out of which several fortunes were drawn. And Mr. Skeggs recalled, with pleasurable emotions, the jolly-faced fellow that, on the day succeeding the last of these ventures, sat on the top of a coach that was driven rapidly through the streets, waving his hat, and proclaiming his sudden elevation from obscurity and penury to fame and wealth, he having been the fortunate drawer of the prize for thirty thousand pounds; but who, it was thought by those better versed in such schemes, at the end of the day returned to his former estate and employer, to receive the reward of acting so well his part;—the

undoubted effect of which would be to incite every one, in every condition of life, to risk at the next lottery what they had and what they had not. Of course Mr. Skeggs' lucubrations, notwithstanding the dimness of his solitary candle, were very bright, and pointed in the direction of the thirty thousand pounds; arriving at which, no wonder he went off again into the parody with greater *verve*, expressing a still stronger desire to become a friend of Bish, and the possessor of the aforesaid amount, and which was only brought to a conclusion by some one stumbling up the dark stairway and shouting for a light.

As Mr. Skeggs opened his door, and held the candle above his head to ascertain the cause of the noise, Captain Lejette mounted the stair and entered the office, rubbing his shins and exclaiming, 'What a confounded hole this is! Why don't you live in a decent place, Mr. Skewers?'

Mr. Skeggs felt like answering by proposing another question, why he could not come at decent hours, when it was not dark, but the Captain's further remarks, by throwing light thereon, rendered it unnecessary.

'I say, Mr. Skewers, had a hard time getting here; it's well it was dark, or I'd have been nabbed, but I twigged him and came round Walbrook. Must change my lodgings again. Know of any quiet out-of-the-way place, Skewers? These fellows are interfering too much with my comforts. Old Draco in?' and with that he knocked at Mr. Hawkes' door and entered, followed a few minutes after by the surgeon.

Captain Lejette's familiarity with Mr. Skeggs is easily accounted for. His incarceration had rendered the services of the latter in attendance on him at the sponging-house necessary and frequent, especially in the matter of bail, which there was considerable difficulty in procuring.

'What's them chaps at this time o' day? 'Tain't a prayer meeting, or they'd invite me. There's some plot a-hatching,' thought Mr. Skeggs. As he had made up his mind not to do 'another hand's turn' in the office that evening, it occurred to him that he might as well employ his leisure time in endeavouring to obtain an inkling of so unusual a course, especially as he was, when it suited, expected to be acquainted with what he could learn in no other way, and therefore he approached the door softly and looked through the key-hole; but as nothing was to be seen, the table at which the conclave was seated being at the end of the room, he applied his ear, but was unable to distinguish

the words, and was about giving it up, when he thought he caught the name of Figgins, whereat he once more bent his ear to the key-hole, but at that moment the door opened and Mr. Hawkes appeared thereat, and was in the act of calling for a document, as he detected Mr. Skeggs on one knee tying his shoe-string, he having had the presence of mind to assume that position and employment. The attorney looked suspiciously at his clerk, and, on receiving the paper asked for, informed him he need not remain any longer, and shut the door.

'Needn't to wait! Yes, after spoiling a fellow's night. Why didn't he tell me that before? he's very thoughtful all at once. Suspects I was listening; so I was, and I'll listen again. Wants me out of the way; finds out I'm improving too fast under his teaching. But what about poor Figgins? Don't like the look o' things. No, Bella's gone now, and I'll not budge till I know what's what.'

With this determination Mr. Skeggs was once more approaching the door on tip-toe, when it was suddenly opened. Adroitly advancing, as though it had been his intention to come and ascertain if he had correctly understood his order, he demanded of Mr. Hawkes, as that gentleman stood in the doorway, 'if he had said he could go?'

'Did I not say it plainly enough?' replied the attorney in a sharp tone.

'Who'll lock up?' said his clerk, by way of palliating his delay, and now desirous of ascertaining what might be of service to Arabella's father to know, and therefore in no hurry to go.

'I'll see to that,' replied the attorney, who still remained at the door, and continued there until Mr. Skeggs had gathered up the articles on his desk, and with his pad deposited them inside thereof, and, seeing no alternative but to comply, changed his coat, took down his hat, and, slamming the door after him, descended into the yard.

'There's mischief brewing; but what's that to me? I've got to do as I'm told. I'm paid for that,—small pay too! Wonder if there's anybody wanting a clerk,—a common law clerk; think I'm qualified. Qualified! he'd qualify Old Nick himself. Well, I 'spose he's qualified already, and Hiram's one of his chips.' Pursuing this train of thought on his way home, Octavius called at the green-grocer's to look at the advertisements in the *Times*, which paper that individual paid sixpence a week for the perusal of, a day old. 'Plenty of wants, but nobody wanted. What's

this? Here's one: "Of prepossessing appearance, steady habits, good address, write fluently, keep books by double entry." Double! that's nothing, we keep 'em by treble entry. "Salary small, merchant's office."' Mr. Skeggs threw down the paper, and decided he'd have to hold on a little longer, and wended his way home.

On entering the lawyer's office, the surgeon had given evidence of an irritable state of temper, whether arising from the unseasonable hour at which, for Lejette's convenience, they were called to do business, or some professional or other reason, was not apparent. More than once he had retorted the Captain's witticisms with some asperity, and for a time succeeded in silencing that jocular individual, whom no reverse seemed to affect,—at least with regard to this feature of his disposition.

'Gentlemen,' said the attorney, in reference to the matter that had called them together, 'I've taken counsel's opinion, and, under the circumstances, I fear we're at a stand, and can do nothing more.'

'Nothing!' ejaculated the Captain. 'By Jove, Hawkes, that's a hard word, and not to be found in your practice, or our vocabulary.'

'Pshaw!' said the surgeon, with a stern confidence, 'more *can* be done, and *must*.'

'Quite right, Doctor; no compulsion, but it must,' chimed in Lejette.

'Then, gentlemen, I should like you to show me how,' said the attorney, as he pushed the papers towards the surgeon.

'Hawkes,' said the latter, as he shoved them back, 'when a patient calls me in, I don't make out a diagnosis of his case and tell him to look into it; my business is to cure.'

'Or kill,' added the irrepressible Lejette.

The surgeon frowned, and continued, 'And so I take such steps as in my judgment will most speedily ensure such a result.'

'Quite sure you do, Scarr,—no question of it;—you're the boy for a doubtful case. There's an example for you, Hawkes.'

The surgeon frowned more severely, then resumed,—'Having proceeded so far, we must go on with it; there's no retreating from our position now.'

'Retreat! who talks of retreat? Show the white feather now!' exclaimed the gallant Captain. 'Hawkes is too good a general for that, he'd face the old boy himself,—eh, Hawkes?'

It was the lawyer's turn to frown now; whereupon the other continued, 'I'd defy him and all his legion to stand that saintly look.'

'Gentlemen,' interposed the good man, 'we've met on serious business, too serious to permit of jesting. I have candidly and conscientiously stated to you the state of the case, as my duty as your legal adviser demanded I should do, and now await your instructions. As your solicitor, I am not here to dictate, but to pursue the course you decide on, always scrupulously endeavouring to keep my professional character and conduct distinct from my responsibility as a'—

'Saint,' interrupted Lejette; 'we understand, Hawkes. Quite right, too, for er—er—I'm—afraid the one would have a devilish bad chance if it was brought up from the reserve to co-operate with the other. He, he, he!

Mr. Hawkes looked daggers. The surgeon said nothing, but secretly chuckled at what he deemed a merited rebuke. The lawyer resumed,—

'As I have just informed you, in its present shape, we have come to a dead lock; neither the property in question, nor any other portion of the estate, can be disposed of until the difficulty is overcome—removed. As to the funded property, the limitations of your interest therein, as trustees, are so clearly stated, that they are an effectual bar to your being able to do anything more than receive the dividends.'

The acute surgeon fancied he had, in the former part of the attorney's statement (that referring to the real estate), detected a meaning in his language, and thereupon concluded that there was a course open to them whereby the difficulty could be removed, and, with a cool indifference as to methods employed, boldly demanded by what means the obstructions alluded to could be evaded. Softening the word by the employment of a legal term, the attorney informed him that they could be *avoided*, and which, of course, drew from his clients a mutual demand for an explanation of the *modus operandi*. Mr. Hawkes in a tortuous manner, exceedingly trying to the patience of his interested hearers, proceeded to explain; but there was such a laboured effort to distinguish between legal and moral procedure throughout the whole, that at the conclusion all they comprehended was that, provided the instructions and responsibility were clearly understood to belong to themselves, and thereby not affect his standing as an upright practitioner, nor endanger his

place on the rolls, there was a breach through which the proverbial coach and six could be driven.

These scruples of the lawyer, every now and again advanced, evidenced that his conscience was still sufficiently tender to render him uneasy when contemplating the doing a wrong, but at the same time not powerful enough to withhold him from its commission. But, by a sophistry common to such deluded men, he argued that their manifestation was an unmistakeable proof that all was still well at the core, and that no overt act of his had blunted the keenness of his moral perceptions.

Flattering, however, as was the unction thus laid to his soul, and satisfactory to his own mode of reasoning, its tendency, in relation to his unscrupulous clients, was the perpetuation of a degree of irritation, always the more or less ready to exhibit itself on any extra outbreak thereof, as on the present occasion; but as his creed pointed to the possibility of their being 'reprobate,' and thereby gave them a claim to his commiseration, he pitied accordingly, and received their occasional reflections on himself, as the natural outcome of the natural man by whom spiritual things cannot be discerned.

To a disinterested person it might have presented itself in a less favourable view, and the apparent divergence have seemed nothing more than a parallel course around the same circle, to which, although there might be two sides, as asserted by the schoolboy,—an *out*side and an *in*side,—yet, as the line describing that circle might be only an imaginary one, the distinction would be as infinitesimal.

During Mr. Hawkes' wearying discussion of the intricacies of his course, consequent on his double position, the surgeon had been listlessly turning over the papers on the table. At its conclusion he raised his eyes towards the Captain, as though awaiting some expression of his views, when, accepting the offered opportunity, he exclaimed,—

'He's very conscientious, Scarr, is he not?—how fortunate we were in getting into his hands!—there's positively no end of his conscience.'

This was said in a tone so unusually serious, that Mr. Hawkes, exceedingly shrewd in other matters, but amazingly vulnerable in this, smiled, and looked very complacent.

'I think so,' said the supercilious surgeon, for once humouring his co-trustee. 'Your discernment's correct; there's no end to it. It will stretch to any length.'

Mr. Hawkes looked suspiciously from one to the other, but as both retained their gravity, he concluded that, though strangely expressed, in some measure attributable to their ignorance of such matters, the *malice prepense* was absent.

But, compelled by his clients to some more explicit statement, it was at length decided that, as a slight, a very slight alteration would empower the trustees to dispose of any portion of the estate they saw fit, besides the one attempted, the alteration was to be made. But this decision was more easily arrived at than accomplished. Was it feasible? On looking through the deed, the falsification requisite was easily understood, but it was a serious undertaking. To misapply, to appropriate to other purposes than intended, and divert the proceeds of rents, interests, and authorized conversions to their own use, led on by pressing need and cupidity, they had thus far not hesitated to do, trusting to their own fertile resources to justify or extricate themselves from any future consequences; but to deliberately proceed to the alteration of a written document, duly signed and attested, was attended with a danger that might involve far more serious issues. And as Mr. Hawkes pointed out the references, in subsequent conditions and provisoes, to the obnoxious clause, it became apparent there were difficulties that required a bold front to face. At the conclusion of a more careful perusal of the deed, the junto were for a while silent, awaiting each some suggestion from the other.

'You see,' at length remarked the lawyer, in a tone that implied that they were now aware that he had not made the objections without sufficient warrant, 'that a case may occur in which, though a possible panacea may exist, the difficulty of its application is such that the remedy may be worse than the disease, and that the most skilful practitioner may very properly hesitate to resort to a course that there are nine chances to one may prove fatal.' The smile that played on Mr. Hawkes' countenance, at the conclusion of this sentence, piqued the surgeon, and he replied with some severity,—

'In the course of our practice, such cases are not infrequent,—cases in which the prescience of the skilful physician warns him of the necessity of prompt, decisive action, and that it is incumbent on him, in the interest of his patient, with whom it is a point of life or death, to resort without hesitation to such remedies as you have indicated; and so, by parity of reason, must it be with lawyers.'

'Capital, capital! Say, Hawkes, too many for you; no use poking fun at the Doctor. "He jests at *Scarrs*, that never felt a wound." He, he, he!'

'I was not jesting, sir,' said the attorney with some sharpness; then, turning to the surgeon, demanded in explicit terms what he proposed should be done.

'What has already been decided on, and from which I see no reason to swerve. Make the required alterations, and as speedily as possible; there's nothing to apprehend, and none to question our proceedings,' said the stubborn, unprincipled man, who, the more opposed, was the more determined.

'A Daniel! a second Daniel!' chimed in the military man.

'I am not so satisfied as to there being nothing to apprehend,' said the attorney.

'Are we, are we, after all our anxiety and unremitting labours, the loss of time, and constant exactions made upon us, to go unrequited, and you be done out of your just legal dues?' pursued the surgeon.

This last was a wise putting of the *argumentum ad hominem*, though it was not at all probable that the attorney, in any case, intended to be done out of them.

'That's it, Scarr. See what it's brought me to,—every penny gone, not a rap left,' said the Captain, surveying his very shabby appearance, and putting his hands into his pockets.

The lawyer was touched, sighed, looked up at the ceiling, and muttered, 'The future.'

'Future! future!' exclaimed the surgeon, as he caught the word; 'pshaw! it troubles me as little as the past. I owe nothing to the one, I expect as little from the other. It is the present.'—Only the bolder utterance of the silent thinkings of many who, too shocked to give expression to such reckless words, are nevertheless by their daily lives affording hourly proof of their being as little affected by any such consideration.

'Integrity is better than riches, and a good name than precious ointment,' observed Mr. Hawkes, evidently struggling, though too feebly to hope for victory.

'You keep the name, and give the ointment to Scarr, it will do for the shop; and I'll take the riches, and plaguey acceptable they'll be,' said the facetious Captain, throwing himself back in his chair with a chuckle.

Mr. Hawkes frowned, whilst the surgeon remarked, 'A fool, when he holds his peace, is accounted wise.'

'Proverbs, from Galen, too. I can match you, Doctor. "A merry heart doth good like a medicine." In which case I ought to have been the doctor. You are too lugubrious, Scarr; you'll give your patients the blues or the nightmare.'

'Honesty, gentlemen'— Mr. Hawkes was about to quote another trite adage, but the surgeon, impatient of this digression, interrupted him, and exclaimed, 'Honesty! pish! in whom do you find it?' As modesty prevented any special claim being laid thereto by either of the other two gentlemen present, the surgeon returned to the subject in hand.

'Then it's clearly understood, without further delay you'll make the necessary alteration, and bring the matter into some tangible shape.'

The attorney again took up the deed, and, following his fingers as he ran them hurriedly along the lines, shook his head, then turned over the last skin, of which there were three, fastened in the left-hand corner by a piece of sealed red tape, and said, 'There's another difficulty.'

'My dear Hawkes, don't you think you'd better not bother with examining it any longer. It's positively unpleasant to be startled by these fresh discoveries. Of course it's all wrong, and never should have been made in that way, but you'll make it all right,—we'll leave it in your hands,' interposed the Captain.

'Easier said than done,' responded the lawyer, still looking into the deed.

'What's the new difficulty?' said the surgeon. 'What is it?'

'The *habendum* clause, as well as the provisos, have each an alteration made in them that has been initialled by the party of the first part, as well as the two witnesses, and the number and purport of these alterations are noted in the attestation. Now, although other erasures could be made and initialled in the body of the deed, none could be made, or rather noted, in the latter; the last sheet would therefore require to be re-engrossed. But whilst there might be no difficulty with regard to the grantor, the witness might, at some future day, possibly stand in your way.'

'Who is he?' demanded the surgeon.

'He happens to be a client of mine, of the name of Figgins.'

'Figgins!' ejaculated the Captain, affecting ignorance of the party. 'I've heard that name before.'

'At the time of executing the deed he was warehouseman to your brother-in-law, and from the confidence foolishly placed in

him, I fear knew too much of his intentions and the nature of this deed to which he is a witness.'

'Can't he be sealed? If I remember correctly, he was an ignorant fellow. Oh, you could manage him, Hawkes. A fig for such a fellow!'

The attorney appeared to be thinking over the matter, then remarked, 'I've lately been concerned for him in a cause that will probably involve him in difficulties that he may be unable to extricate himself from, if pressed. Should you authorize me, I might, on certain conditions, offer to assist him.'

The military client responded, 'That's it!—another Daniel! I knew it. Leave Hawkes alone for seeing his way through a milestone; and as to his conscience, it always runs neck and neck with his interest.'

Pleased at the allusion to his ability, a smile was lighting up the lawyer's countenance, but it died off at the flattering reference to his conscientiousness, and produced some qualms. 'Gentlemen, I must again remind you that I must be considered as solely acting under your instructions, and upon your responsibility. I hope I have made myself understood.'

'Perfectly, Hawkes,—only we're a little dense at times, specially Scarr. Do explain once more for his benefit.'

Without noticing the interruption, the lawyer continued,—'And in advising how to proceed in accordance with these instructions, I do so as your legal adviser, whose duty is to consult his clients' wishes and interests, without assuming any liability for your acts, or entertaining any *bias* in favour of a process that would be more in accord with my convictions.'

'O yes! O yes! we perfectly understand all that,' exclaimed the surgeon, who did by this time perfectly comprehend the virtuous scruples of his adviser, and also was quite aware how far his responsibility extended, Mr. Hawkes' efforts to minify it to the contrary notwithstanding, and that, despite his protestations, he could not divest himself of the onus resting on him; nevertheless he deemed it expedient to humour him, for, provided the end was attained, he was not unwilling that the attorney should enjoy the full benefit of any fancied protection along a course that, there was no doubt, he found it hard enough to travel, without adding thereto by depriving him of such consolation as he could get, and in which view the Captain, still more indifferent, entirely coincided. Not that the attorney, by such salves to his conscience, or apparent cautious procedure, entertained any idea

that his clients would stay proceedings; he knew them too well. And as his own interest was identified with theirs, he was too wise a saint to become a martyr at this phase of a procedure that paid so well; besides, the Rubicon had been already passed, and in these tortuous proceedings he had gone too far to retreat now.

It was therefore decided that the attorney was to commence operations without loss of time, and to take such steps in regard to Figgins as his acquiescence or refractoriness might necessitate, or the course of events might require.

The conference being thus terminated to their mutual satisfaction, Captain Lejette, glad to escape further detention, took leave of the other two, who appeared to have some more private business on hand that would detain the surgeon awhile longer, and opened the door, but had no sooenr done so than his hat, gloves, and cane fell to the floor, and he stood transfixed, his blanched cheeks, opened mouth, and staring eyes attesting to the startling effect of some apparition visible by the feeble rays of light passing into the clerk's dark office. Had it been the clerk, the probability is his humour might have prompted him to address him in some tragic strain, and exclaim, 'Is this a ghost I see before me?' But the garrulous, valiant Captain was too unnerved either to speak or move. Hastily rising, and not without trepidation on the part of the conscientious attorney, he and the surgeon approached the door, but before they had time to look through, the mysterious occupant of the room had stepped forward, and, laying his hand on the Captain's arm, exclaimed, 'Beg pardon, Capen, for 'truding, but you're my pris'ner,' at the same time touching his finger to his round oil-skin hat, as he looked at the attorney. He was a jolly, red-faced, bushy-whiskered, middle-sized, compact-built man, his thick neck surrounded by a loose red belcher, and his upper person clothed in a rusty velveteen shooting-jacket, whilst the lower was encased in a pair of corduroys, terminating a short space above a pair of top-boots, the tops being of the usual glazed cream-colour, or had been of that colour originally. A thick knotted thorn protruded from under his arm, his hand, at the moment of effecting the capture, exhibiting a slip of parchment for the Captain's inspection, and by virtue of which he professed to act.

'Who the devil sent for you?' exclaimed the unfortunate captive, as soon as he regained his breath, at the same time

recognising the sheriff's officer as the man whom, as he had felicitated himself, and so stated to Skeggs, he had outstrategied on his way to the office.

'Don't think I were sent for, at least by that 'ere genelman you speak on, nor his friend neither,'—looking very knowingly at the Captain, and then at his two friends. 'A fair ketch, genelmen, an' no mistake. Hard chivey—nearly lost scent—but know'd my quarry 'ud be like to bring up at his lawyer's. They old birds as has been trapped afore is mighty hard to catch anyways.' He looked over at the attorney, and, touching his hat again, said, 'No offence, Mr. Hawkes; been waiting for the genelman some time; he's fort'nit he's your klient; you'll soon make it all square.'

'It's very unfortunate, and I must apologize to these gentlemen for this man's excessive impertinence in forcing himself into your presence,' exclaimed the Captain with unusual seriousness.

'Come now, draw it mild, Capen! no force—all accordin' to law, as Lawyer Hawkes knows. Just opened your outer door, lawyer, and walked in.'

'Am I not protected in a lawyer's office?' said the Captain, appealing to the attorney. Mr. Hawkes merely shrugged his shoulders. Then, assuming a jocular tone, he addressed the officer, 'I'll tell ye what, my good man, I'll give ye a crown to give me a chance.'

'Which is that?' said the man, not unwilling to earn a shilling in a safe way.

'Just you go to the foot of the stairs, and take me when I come out, if you can. It's disrespectful to these gentlemen to arrest me in their presence, and to enter a door without knocking.'

'You be jiggered! I hain't such a muff; let you cut off after I ran you into kiver!'

'Give him a chance, and I'll add another crown,' interposed the surgeon, moved to an unwonted degree of pity and liberality at his co-trustee's plight.

The bailiff looked at the surgeon, imitated his half-closed eyes, and said, 'I'm werry green! you'll have to come it a good deal han'somer nor that; why, I'm to get a suv'rin hextra for nabbin' him. I'll tell ye what I'll do, I'll do it for a suv'rin apiece all three. Now, that's fair, hain't it?'

'Take him, Doctor; take him, Hawkes, and give him a

sovereign for me;—you'll win!' exclaimed the Captain, glancing furtively at the window behind, but which action did not escape the keen officer, who immediately added,—

'Purwided Lawyer Hawkes here goes bail he'll come down the stairs 'onourably, an' not go no other way.'

Mr. Hawkes shook his head; the project was hopeless.

'Come on then, mister, it's a gone case; an' it's gittin' late, an' I've another to ketch. 'Scuse liberties.' And with that he twisted his arm around that of his prisoner, grasped him by the cuff, and hurried him to the outer door, where he halted, at the request of the attorney, in order that he might learn some particulars preparatory to his efforts to obtain bail; which, at the urgent request of the captive, he promised to put in as soon as it could be procured.

'That man's going to the bad as fast as he can,' said the lawyer, as he returned with the surgeon to his room, after lighting the bailiff and his charge down the stairs, but to which the other made no reply.

On re-seating themselves, after a few further animadversions on the conditions and prospects of the Captain, the lawyer introduced the subject which they had remained to discuss, and which had special reference to the Herberts; the result of which was that, as the estate was likely to become much more productive than at first anticipated, and the amount to be settled on Miss Harriet at her marriage would in consequence be very respectable, it was arranged that an extra pressure should be put on those over whom the surgeon appeared to exercise a baleful influence.

Notwithstanding the flimsy disguise thrown over his part in the foregoing transaction by the conscientious lawyer, the notable feature therein was doubtless its transparency, rendered the more striking by the contrasted audacity of his two clients, neither of whom were at the slightest pains to disguise his ostensible motive, or to conceal his appreciation of the attorney's scruples.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE 'SHADDERIN'' COMING ON.

A FEW days subsequent to the transactions narrated in the last chapter, Mr. Figgins might have been seen once more on his way from the attorney's office in Barge Yard to his shop in Wapping, his strange actions occasionally attracting attention as he proceeded. At one time, after indulging in an audible conversation with some invisible person, with whom it was evident he was in no good humour, he stopped short to inquire of a young man who kept turning round to look at him, if he owed him anything, whereat the young man laughed and hurried on. At another time two sewing-girls were arrested, as they separated to get past him, by his exclaiming aloud, 'Bodkins, Bodkins!' and whereat the said girls became quite tickled, and called after him, 'Needles and pins!' and then pursued their course, almost convulsed at the appropriateness of their retort, but without producing any effect upon the object of their merriment, who continued his erratic proceedings until arrived at the wall of the St. Katherine's Dock, where he was attracted by the mute appeal of a woolly-headed African, a painted board around whose neck set forth a strong claim to relationship with white humanity in general. Mr. Figgins stopped and read, 'Am I not a man and a brother?' and then entered into a critical examination of the painting above those words, representing a coal-black African being drawn into a ship, minus a leg, with which a shark was making off at full speed, which led Mr. Figgins to a further scrutiny, whereby he ascertained, from the legless stump of the black man seated on the pavement, it was intended for that individual, the painting having been executed from a sketch made on the spot during the operation. Having in so forcible a manner been reminded of his relationship, Mr. Figgins was unable to tear himself from his new-found brother until he had

deposited a copper coin in his hat, whereat he seemed considerably relieved; but had only proceeded a short way before he stopped to take a 'last fond look' at his coloured relative, when, to his surprise, he beheld him running at full speed across the road into a by-street, instigated thereto by the appearance of a street-keeper at some distance, and which would have called forth an expostulation from Mr. Figgins at the inhumanity of the said official, but that he became dumbfounded at perceiving the black individual had regained his deficient leg. As Mr. Figgins pursued the remainder of his way home, his cogitations on this miracle prevented any return to his earlier thoughts.

On entering the shop he passed through into the back room, where he threw himself into the arm-chair, canting his hat into a corner of the room, or rather intending so to do, for unluckily it came in contact with a mug on the side-table, in which were some flowers purchased at Covent Garden, a gift from Octavius, which fell to the ground and broke. Both Arabella and her mother started, but a glance at her husband told the latter that something unpleasant had occurred, and she exclaimed,—

'Why, what's a matter, father?'

'Didn't I say it—didn't I say as I'd a shadderin'?'

'What's a matter, pa?' said Arabella, with some trepidation.

'Oh, nothin', nothin',' said Mr. Figgins, leaning back in his chair, and throwing one leg over the other, whilst the pendent foot went off into a rapid oscillation.

'Where have you been?' said Mrs. Figgins, standing in front of him.

'There, that's just like you, allers a-wantin' to vorm heverything out of a feller the moment he says anything. Get hoff, do.' These last three words were addressed to the cat, who, according to usage, had jumped on to his knee, but whom, as he uttered these words, he pushed off. 'That cat's a nuisance! vy don't you 'tend to it, an' not stand a-questioning me?'

'Puss, puss,' said Mrs. Figgins, observing the animal was about making another effort to regain his accustomed place, and thereupon gave him a slap that caused him to change his mind.

'There's no call to be so hugly an' vent your spite on the poor cat, which 'as done nothing.'

Mrs. Figgins took no further notice, but returned to the ironing with which she had been occupied on her husband's entry, just then engaged upon one of his shirts, in the 'getting up' of which she prided herself, and obtained considerable credit

for amongst her female friends; but it was apparent she was not likely to be so successful in the present instance, as, forgetting to try the fresh iron in the usual manner with her wetted finger, the first impression thereof caused it to stick to the garment, and in a succeeding effort she was rudely brought to a stand by thrusting the point under the plaits, whereby they were considerably deranged, all demonstrating that her thoughts were elsewhere.

In the meantime Arabella gathered up the broken fragments of the mug, and mopped up the water, and deposited the flowers in a cup. Mutually aware by this time that the wisest course in Mr. Figgins' present state of mind was, as on most such occasions, to leave him to himself, and allow him to follow his own provokingly slow way of communicating his morning's adventures, the ladies preserved a rigid silence. Thinking it possible such an eventuality might earlier ensue were he left alone with her mother, Arabella made the excuse of attending to the shop, where she remained for a short time, but on her return found matters as she left them.

Presently Mr. Figgins was observed to exhibit signs of restlessness, whereupon his daughter, moved by her sympathetic nature, was about to break through her wise restraint and approach him, but a discouraging look from her mamma deterred her, which had more than once to be repeated, whereby Mrs. Figgins avoided having two ruffled ones to deal with, as any untimely interference with Mr. Figgins would assuredly have called forth some rebuff that would have disturbed the daughter also. Therefore, although at some sacrifice to feelings, the sagacious mother insisted upon waiting patiently until it should be the temporary autocrat's good will and pleasure to unbend, and graciously make known the state of affairs.

Mr. Figgins became more fidgety, and another movement on the part of the impetuous girl was met by a warning shake of the head from the mother. Mr. Figgins sat up in his chair and began stirring the fire, until, knocking the live coal into the clear red-hot centre, he succeeded in spoiling it for the irons, which thereupon were soon blackened by the gassy smoke; but this had no effect on the self-command of the laundress, although some was being produced on the stoker, for, giving two or three extra digs through the top bar, he exclaimed,—

'O no! it wouldn't be no hodds if I were put hout o' my cotempry hexistence.' A pause. 'Hodds! I'd be best hout o' the

way; hold men and puppy-dogs is fit to be hanged, which it would be best for a 'umble being like me.' Mr. Figgins' musings were not interfered with, under the impression that they would presently assume a more intelligible shape. 'O no! who'd mind? Plenty o' husbands and fathers, which is to be got every day a deal better a precious sight nor hold Figgins, which is allers misfort'nit.' The tears were in Arabella's eyes, and they were not far from the same place in her mother's, but the brave little woman was trying to hold out till the proper time. Mr. Figgins drew a heavy sigh, and looked, as though accidentally, towards the ironing table, but for which Mrs. Figgins was evidently prepared, for she became at that moment most energetically engaged in passing the iron over the wristband of a shirt, and called Bella's attention to a loose button thereon, which she undertook to fasten.

'Well, I s'pose a prison's good enough for me, and then they'll hall go to pot;' this was uttered by the injured man in a louder key.

'You'll be sure your father don't get that shirt, now, without sewing on that button; and here's another would be the better of a tack,' said Mrs. Figgins, as she carefully lifted the nicely ironed and folded garment and laid it aside. 'I wouldn't have him put it on without for anything.'

'Give it me now, ma; I love to do anything for dear old daddy.' After rummaging her workbox for a needle and thread, she sat down between the table and her father to perform the little duty.

Mr. Figgins coughed and fidgeted, then rose and arranged the cushion of his chair, that he declared 'was as lumpy as every one else.'

Before her mother had time to stay her, Arabella had laid down her work and had got hold of the cushion. 'Let me, pa; you know you always say there's no one can make that nasty old cushion so even and soft as me.' There was something so congenial to Mr. Figgins' state of mind in the term nasty, and the way the young lady shook and slapped the cushion, as though paying it out for annoying her dear old pa, addressing it all the while in a scolding tone, that it had quite a mollifying effect, and by the time she had finished he was fast thawing. 'There now! no, wait a minute, there's a crease;—now then!'

'Oh, don't mind that,' said Mr. Figgins, as though indifferent to the proceeding.

'But I must; now, daddy, I think that'll do.'

Mr. Figgins sat down, and Arabella stood by his side, awaiting

the issue, but he only coughed and looked down at Tom, stretched before the fire. Arabella stooped down and caressed the cat, at the same time looking stealthily up into her father's face; she thought she saw a gleam like the old look, but it was struggling through a cloud,—and was she mistaken?—as his eyes passed momentarily from the cat to herself, she thought she also saw an unusual glistening; they were moist, and his face was twitching. Unable longer to control her feelings, she jumped up and seated herself on his knee, and leaned her head on his bosom and wept.

'Bless me, child, what's a matter?' said the disturbed man, still trying to restrain himself, until, unable longer to do so, he passed his arms around her, and exclaimed, 'Bella! Bella! what's the matter?'

'Oh, pa,' she replied, 'nothing; but what's the matter with you?'

He could not speak, but more than one big tear, as it fell on his daughter's cheek, told the reaction had set in, and now mother and daughter were sharing the outburst of an affection that, rough as its exhibition was, by its strong manifestation proved its depth.

Unable to command her feelings, the ardent girl had thus earlier broken down her petulant parent than would have been the case had the more quiet mode of the mother been followed; but, under the circumstances, it was perhaps the better, for the revulsion of feeling at once brought all into harmony, and as the mountain flowed down, it was not long before they obtained a recital of the grievance that had so affected Mr. Figgins; from which it appeared that, in furtherance of the decision arrived at by the attorney and his two clients, as shown in the preceding chapter, he had, in compliance with a request by post that morning, waited on Mr. Hawkes at his office, where the questionable affair had been broached to him in the attorney's usual sleek manner, in which he had laboured hard to make his obtuse client see the case in a perfectly correct light, both morally and legally, but which the dealer in marine quiddities had been unable to do or to comprehend, until, after putting questions to him in his own blunt, but to himself much more apprehensible, way, it dawned upon him that he was required to do *something* that, though *nothing*, as the attorney gravely assured him, could not be so exactly of that negative character, seeing that for its success no one else—not even Mrs. Figgins, from whom he never yet had hid anything (despite his own idea to the contrary)—was to be informed thereof. By dint of perseverance in his efforts to get

at the rights, he became satisfied that all was not straightforward, and therefore very positively and obstinately insisted that he 'warn't going to do nothing of the kind for no man nor no woman neither.' Whereupon the pressure agreed to be put on, in case of non-compliance, was applied; and Mr. Figgins was further enlightened as to his own especial interest in the matter, which, as gathered from the relation thereof to his wife, amounted to this:—On making up a statement of the effects of the Trelawney estate, vested in Messrs. Scarr and Lejette in trust for the son, an entry of one hundred pounds appeared in the books against the name of Mr. Figgins, explained by that person as understood by him at the time to have been intended as a gift, but of which he could produce no proof. For the recovery of this sum it had been decided to proceed against him, to be followed by an attachment for the taxed costs in his unfortunate action against Mrs. Bodkins, that, as before seen, had come to a premature close, owing to the rather late discovery by the defendant's attorney that his client was a married woman.

Having in his own peculiar style acquainted Mr. Figgins with the nature of his instructions, the onus of which he threw upon his clients, he went on to protest against his being placed in so painful a position, one which would issue in Mr. Figgins' incarceration, unless obviated, as he devoutly hoped it would be, by his timely acceptance of the alternative,—of so trivial a nature that he was surprised at his hesitation; in which case, he was authorized to state, further proceedings would not only be stayed, but his clients generously undertook to see to the payment of the costs in Mrs. Bodkins' suit.

The mention of this last name, coupled with the positive assurance that he could not recover the amount of his bill against her, so incensed Mr. Figgins, that the irritation under which he had laboured whilst listening to Mr. Hawkes could no longer be controlled, and thereupon he made use of some very strong language, by way of enlightening the attorney as to the high opinion he entertained of his piety and straightforwardness; the very *natural* result whereof was that the attorney himself became exasperated, and threatened him with arrest, unless the claims were settled within a week. On which terms the two had closed their interview.

'And what harm would it be, pa, for you to sign your name?' said Arabella, at the termination of her father's confused account of the morning's conference.

'What 'arm?'

'Yes; don't you do it every day?'

'Never! never did such a thing.'

'Why, pa, how can you say that? didn't you sign the petition the other day to get that poor sailor off being hung?'

'Yes, an' I 'opes they'll do it, and, w'at's more, hang the lawyer in his place.'

'O fie! Then what harm would it be in helping others in trouble?'

'Well, Bell, you see that 'ere's too deep for a young voman.' Bella set her imagination to work for a minute or two to fathom its depths, in the meantime combing his whiskers with her fingers, but found it was too deep for her, and gave it up. ''Sides, he on'y vanted a part of my name.'

'A part! Well, then, I'm sure you could have given him that, and not care a F-i-g,—that's a part.' Arabella laughed, and Mr. Figgins laughed and tickled her neck, and, looking up at his wife, remarked, 'An't she a puss?' to which that lady assented by a smile, and asked what part of his name was wanted.

'Vy, the hinkles; I think that's w'at he called them.'

'Hinkles!' exclaimed Arabella.

'Hinkles!' echoed Mrs. Figgins, putting down the cold iron on the hearth and replacing it by a warm one. 'There's no hinkles in it,—he's a queer lawyer to spell Figgins that way.'

'Hinkles?' repeated Arabella again; 'are you sure he said hinkles, pa?'

'No, I'm sure o' nothin' now—'cept the jail or the gallus.'

'O pa! don't speak that way, it makes me shiver,' said Arabella.

'Mother, don't you mind I said t'other night I'd a shadderin' come over me, or what this gal calls a—a'—

'Presentiment,' interposed Miss Figgins.

'Yes, a pleasantment,—though I don't see that; think you're wrong there this time, Bell,—there's nothing werry pleasant-meant about it. It's a werry onpleasant circumstance.'

'Very, pa,—very.'

'Well, I say so, don't I?'

'No, but don't say werry.'

'But I do, I say it's werry onpleasant.'

'O dear me, you tiresome old creature, if I don't pull your whiskers for you!' exclaimed Miss Figgins, suiting the action to the word.

'Well, as I were saying, I said I 'ad an onpleasantment of what were coming, and all along o' that ere 'ooman. Wimmen's the hold mischief, they is.'

'Are, pa.'

'Well, are; and that they is. What a blessed 'appy 'usband hold Bodkins must be, an' what a fool I were, a-letting of her 'ave all she vanted, an' she a-larfin' up her sleeve all the time. It's my misfortin to be bamboozled with wimmen; there's that gal'—Mr. Figgins was about enumerating some well-known instances in which he had suffered loss by feminine artifice, but the ladies interposed.

'Well, they're all alike. No lie that as Solomon said, and he'd some experience, ''Ooman's fishy.' An' so they is,—never spoke a truer word, Mother Bodkins to the fore. Some on 'em 's married ven they choose, an' some on 'em there is as ain't, an' some on 'em vants to be. Rise, Bell, you're too heavy.' Miss Figgins rose from her father's knee, and, taking a chair, seated herself by his side. 'But I'd like to know,' resumed Mr. Figgins, 'how I'd know a married 'ooman? it hain't so easy to tell; some on 'em 's werry deceptive in their 'pearance.'

'Are, pa.'

'Are; well, we've been in the r's long enough,—it's time we got to the esses,' said Mr. Figgins petulantly.

'Bella, don't tease your father,' interposed her mother; 'he's tired.'

'Let the gal alone; don't be so fond o' scolding.'

'She wasn't scolding,' said Arabella.

'Well, as I were a-saying, which is, or are, whichever's right, how 'm I to tell a Miss Bodkins from a Mrs. ven she comes into the shop to buy a harticle for her sveet Villiam?'

'O my! can't you tell that, father?' said Jake, as he bounced into the room to see if dinner was ever going to be ready; 'I'd know 'em anywhere.'

'What's that 'ere boy talking about? he's the worst boy in Wappin'.' A mild reproof of both father and son from Mrs. Figgins readjusted this little mistake, and the latter was ordered into the shop to attend thereto, into which, as he retired, he reminded his mother that he was hungry.

'Well, as I were a-sayin' by way of hargument ven that boy stopped me, I'd like to know what business it's o' mine or your'n, when a person buys an' don't pay down, whether she's married or no, and, 'sides, whether or no, if you know'd they was Miss last

veek, is that any reason they mayn't be Missus this?—them things 'appens hevery day.'

'I think I'd soon find out,' said Mrs. Figgins, smiling at her daughter.

'Find out!—now, there you go agin! Pray, am I to ax hevery 'ooman an' gal as wants trust, "Air you married?"'

'Certainly not,' responded his wife; 'but you ought at your time of life to pretty well know the differ by this time.' Miss Figgins, though she did not say so, was quite of her mother's way of thinking. For instance, look at her mother and herself,—the former wore caps, and her hair in a knot, fastenêd with a large comb behind, and there were one or two wrinkles in her forehead. She was quite sure Mr. Skeggs would know; though she could imagine that it was natural that women should be better informed on this point than men.

'Now, my dear, how can you talk in that way?' exclaimed her peevish husband; 'I'd like to know how you or anybody 'ud know.'

'I'd know,' said Master Figgins, whose head was at that moment inside the half-open door, at which he had been listening since his expulsion, 'cos they've babies.'

'Vill you shut that door and 'tend to the shop?' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, making a feint to rise, whereupon Jake's head disappeared, and the door was slammed. Mr. Figgins sat still a short time, as though trying to recall the 'hargument;' and then, resolved not to give in, or stop till he had gained his point, continued, 'Oh, I mind now where I was. Well, I'll put it in this 'ere shape:—Hif a man, a coorse, as you'd not seen afore, were to come into that 'ere shop to buy a marlinspike, how would you come to know hif he were spliced or no?—now hanswer me that hif you can.' He struck the elbow of his chair, and looked with an air that seemed to say he had posed Mrs. Figgins this time, and then shook his head at his daughter, as much as to say, 'Who's wisest now?' Miss Figgins did seem a little surprised at this unexpected display of wisdom on the paternal side; but it occurred to her, as it did to her mother, that this was an evasive way of putting it, and that he was travelling out of the record so as to place her mother in a dilemma (of course she did not pretend to know anything about corollaries or lemmas, for, as shown by this history, the schoolmaster still dwelt in his obscurity in Yorkshire) by substituting a man for the woman, and of course, unprepared for this change of base, Mrs. Figgins

looked perplexed, and stood thinking at the tablecloth, which she had commenced laying for dinner, assisted by her daughter.

'Now,' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, enjoying his seeming triumph, and again striking the arm of his chair with his fist,—'now, how'd you do it?' Miss Figgins regarded her mother with some doubt as to her ability to extricate herself from the false position in which she had been placed, and was about to remonstrate with her father thereon, when a smile lighting up her mother's face reassured her, and she paused.

'What is it?' observed Mrs. Figgins; 'would I know if a man was married?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Figgins, 'I've pinned you there. Another blow on the chair-arm, at the same time, from the restored appearance of his wife's countenance becoming rather suspicious that he had not pinned her.

'Of course I would.'

Mr. Figgins' beaming aspect wasc hanging. 'Then I'd like to know how,' said he.

'By his bald head, to be sure,' exclaimed Mrs. Figgins, with a sly look at her daughter, whose eyes twinkled again, as she recognised this new proof of the marvellous intelligence of her mother, and forthwith wondered whether Octavius would lose his hair too when he changed his state of single blessedness, and at what stage of his married life this would take place, and why it occurred after marriage, and how, together with half-a-dozen other equally pertinent ideas, to all of which she resolved to obtain a solution from her mother on the first opportunity.

As for Mr. Figgins, there was no more spirit in him; instinctively he raised his hand to that part of his head long bare of hair, and continued drawing it over it as though rubbing the new idea into his cranium, or, it may be, to hide the irrefutable evidence of his discomfiture. It does, however, seem strange that it did not occur to the propounder of the abstruse problem that there would be some difficulty in the application of his wife's test to the other sex, for at that period most ladies wore caps, and those who did not wore something else; but he had incautiously, if not unfairly, changed his premises, and made the proposition in this altered shape, and must consequently abide by the conclusion. One favourable result of his defeat was, that during his silent musings he was fast coming to the conclusion that so wise a woman would be a very wise counsellor, and resolved, as he had done on some other occasions,

to consult her in future before involving himself in inextricable difficulties.

During Mr. Figgins' cogitations, the mother and daughter were busied in their preparations for dinner, in the midst of which the other two children came in from school, and soon a hitherto happy family were seated around a table whose humble fare was partaken of with the best provocative thereto, a good appetite, for, as Mr. Figgins expressed it, 'hunger was good sauce.'

'Bella,' said Figgins, as they rose from table, after grace had been said by his wife, 'Are ye 'specting Tavy to-night?'

'Not to-night, pa; this is not his night.'

'No, a coorse it hain't; it's never his night ven I wants him.'

'Why, you never want him, do you?' Mr. Figgins made no reply, but, taking down his pipe, was soon enveloped in a cloud of his own raising, as he sat over the fire revolving his hard fate, and during which Benny and Toddles contrived to mount his knees, and nearly broke his pipe. As he laid it aside, he put his arms around them and drew them to his breast with a warmth, followed by a heavy sigh, that told what had been the tenor of his thoughts. But, endeavouring to assume a cheerful manner, he was soon engaged questioning them as to their progress at school, and informed them how he used to astonish his father by his larnin' when he was a boy.

'Why, pa,' said Ben, 'were you ever a boy?'

'Were I! I b'lieve ye. An' there's no boys now-a-days like them. We *was* boys then. We'd fight like fun! a 'alf-a dozen on us 'ud clear the whole street! And as to schoolin', I'd gone through Red Ridinghood, the horn-book, and on as far as Jack an' the Beanstalk, afore I'd left,—books as 'll allus be books. Do they teach 'em in your school, Jake?'

'No, father, we ain't got that far yet.'

'Ah, I thought not; when ye are ye'll know all about 'em.' As the school-hour had returned, with the mutual admonitions of their parents, the children went off thereto, whilst Mr. Figgins withdrew to the shop, where he found, in his endeavour to apply his wife's axiom, the difference between theory and practice. Mrs. Figgins and her daughter in the meanwhile began to talk over the confused revelation of his morning's adventure, in which however, they were considerably bothered, especially as they had not the proper clue to the origin of the difficulty. This much they were agreed on, that Mrs. Bodkins had been sued by Mr. Figgins for the value of the articles procured by her at the shop,

and for which proceeding Mr. Figgins, and with him the whole family, were, for some incomprehensible reason, to be punished. Whereupon Mrs. Figgins, in animadverting on Mrs. Bodkins' conduct, took occasion to give certain salutary advice to her daughter on the duties of wives, which drew forth an expostulation from the young lady at talking in that way to her.

'Of course, Arabella, both your father and myself have got eyes,—we ain't blind; and you know, my dear, we've gone through these trying things ourselves, and can therefore feel for others; and what we would say, love, is, have a care how you place your virtuous affections on the object of your choice. Beware, Arabella, for all men ain't fathers.'

Whether the young lady saw anything peculiar in this last assertion or not, certainly she appeared surprised, and very naïvely inquired of her mother 'if her pa had children when she married him, and that she never knew that before, and what became of the children?'

'Lor', child, what makes you ask that?' exclaimed Mrs. Figgins, repudiating the idea as somewhat derogatory, and then going on to explain her meaning, that 'all men would not make such excellent husbands as her father, who was an affectionate parent, and a native citizen of Wapping, as is respected and beloved by all, except Mrs. Bodkins, and which brings me to say, never buy anything unbeknowing to your husband, for you see the consequences in her unhappy case.' Mrs. Figgins was rather astray here, as it was not Mrs. Bodkins' husband that was the sufferer by such a course, but somebody else's.

'Well, ma, you do talk funny! What's a matter? I'm not buying anything unbeknown to father, and if I was,—but I ain't. I've no husband, have I?'

'Yes, that's just the way I used to talk to people,—and they a-seeing all the time; and I'd get teasing my sister, your Aunt Jane that is, and pretending that Guy,—that's your father, as you hear me call him sometimes, though that ain't his name, but because he had so many tricks, he had, he'd make us all laugh by the hour, he'd make such a guy of himself; he wasn't so steady then,—that is, he was steady, but he wasn't so old as now,—howsomever, as I was saying, your father,—that is, your aunt—dear me, you've confused me,—what was I saying? Oh, ah! as I was remarking, "Jane," I'd say, "when's it to be?"—just making believe I thought he came after her, which he didn't,—"is the ring bought?" as though I didn't know, and as though nobody else know'd.

So you needn't make any pretences, Bella, because it looks like hoodwinking, which is deceptious, and might lead to worse.'

'What makes you talk so, ma?'

'Well, then, it's my duty as your mother to inform you that though you nor he ain't yet asked us, you've got our consent. For me and your father's talked it over together since the last evening as he was here, and perwided he comes out straight—that's your father's words—in the matter of that woman whose name I won't mention (Mrs. Bodkins, I mean), he'll have no objections.

'Comes out straight!' exclaimed Miss Figgins, forgetting, in her eagerness to defend the character of the party uppermost in her thoughts, that her mamma had not yet reached the point in which she should appear to be understood, no person as yet having been named by her. 'Why, you don't think Octavius would do anything wrong, especially against us?'

'Well, so I say, but your father's more dubesome than me; and you know, Bella dear, it's my duty to inform you London's full o' gay deceivers, and, as I said before, there ain't many fathers now-a-days.'

'But, ma, Mr. Skeggs thinks so much of pa; and as for you, he thinks you're a nonesuch, there's not another woman like you.'

Mrs. Figgins hung her head to conceal the pleasant smile that these flattering words called up, and, folding her pocket-handkerchief on her knee, said,

'I'm sure I am much obliged for Mr. Skeggs' opinion; there are worse women in the world, I daresay, and I think Mr. Skeggs knows a thing or two;' then, looking up with a little archness, she added, 'And what does he think of the daughter?'

'The daughter!' responded Miss Figgins, for the moment not quite comprehending whom she meant; then, detecting her meaning in her smile, she added, 'Get along with you, you dear naughty old woman, to say such things!'

'That do so mind me of myself,' said Mrs. Figgins; 'girls are such pretenders.'

'Well, you don't think very highly of us, before we're women.'

'Oh, there's much of a muchness in you all; but what I say is, or what I was going to say, always be what you seem, and don't spend anybody's money that isn't your own.'

A call from her father, who required her assistance in the shop, put a period to their conversation, and Arabella, only stopping to assure her mother that Mr. Skeggs would come out all right, joined Mr. Figgins behind the counter.

CHAPTER XLVI.

LAST DAY AT GRUMBLEBY.

ELATED at the prospect of quitting for ever the scene of so much of early trial and hardship, Frendzburgh's spirits had risen to an unwonted height, and friend and foe participated in the overflowings thereof, equally sharing in his generosity, as he distributed amongst them little articles not likely to be of further use to himself, and in his proffer to call with messages on any of their friends in London, the presumed habitat of most of the school. The rare occurrence of a scholar leaving Grumbleby always caused his schoolmates, during the interval from its becoming known to his departure, to look upon the highly fortunate one with a respect amounting to veneration, and that transformed his bitterest persecutor into a deferential friend.

The commissions with which he was entrusted were of course numerous, and often singular. Few could give any explicit direction as to where their friends lived, yet they did not fail to extort the promise that the homeward-bound lad would find them out. In some cases they remembered it was a street that turned into a square, the boy having some faint recollection of being permitted to play thereon; while another had lively recollections of wide gravel roads, running between beautiful large spreading trees, that were entered by a very narrow passage at one corner, with large perpendicular bars at either end, to prevent anything but pedestrians passing through, and that, just after entering, there were five or six large boxes, at each of which a man or woman used to stand with a cow, and sell milk and curds and whey; and a soldier, with a tall hairy hat, walked up and down by the side of a wall, for whom their nursemaids seemed to have a special regard, betrayed by stealthy conversations. By such plain directions as these the departing lad was assured he would find each boy's house, and undertook to inform their friends that they

too wanted to come home; and was also to mind and tell them how they were whacked, and did not get enough to eat, and not to believe the letters they got, and various similar libels on the fair fame of the institution; but which, happily for its reputation, either from the aforesaid indefiniteness, or the absorption of his thoughts and time in his new and altered circumstances, were rarely or ever attended to, and soon both the commissioned and the commissioners passed from each other's memories.

In addition, however, to the verbal instructions, it was not unusual to entrust the boy with a packet of letters bearing equally intelligible addresses, such as 'to father' or 'mother,' sometimes to 'Ann' or 'Jem,' according as the writer's bias suggested, or the party addressed was likely to be most influenced by the representation of his case. But these treasonable effusions were very readily and summarily dealt with, without causing disturbance to the friends, or detriment to the institution, for the authorities always saw to the packing of the trunks, Mrs. Kearas herself personally superintending that operation, so that there was no chance of anything obnoxious to the establishment escaping her observation; and even if the letters were not deposited therein by the owner, they had such a pleasant happy way of treating him during the last few days of his sojourn in the Elysium, that it was the easiest thing imaginable to worm out of him the fact of his being thus entrusted, and then of relieving him of his important despatches surreptitiously or otherwise.

The present occasion was no exception, consequently writing-paper was at a premium, and, as a result, copy-books grew much smaller in bulk, and, in default, dirty fly-leaves of grammars, primers, or other works were in request, an increased amount of dilapidation thereby ensuing, followed by the usual plenary atonement. The superlative difficulty, however, was pens; the half-dozen or so that served the school by turns were securely locked up in the teacher's desk. Some ingenuity was therefore requisite to meet this want, but, with boys whose daily life was one of expedients, substitutes were soon forthcoming, in crow quills wofully mangled, wooden skewers, slate-pencils cut to fine points, and other equally apposite contrivances; and some score or more might be seen at the desks, during play-hours, transferring their glowing thoughts to the soiled slips of paper, endeavouring to convey most enchanting illustrations of their enviable situations, but which, alas! in most cases proved abortive, huge ink blots or unintelligible letters, sometimes smeared out

with the finger or licked up with the tongue, necessitating their being rewritten, with no better results, until finally they were torn up in despair; whilst others, equally unsuccessful for similar reasons, concluded they would not write this time, but just tell Trelawney what to say, and soon the number dwindled down to one or two, whose perseverance might have been rewarded with better success, but that their feelings, overcome by the relation of their grievances, and their passionate appeals for restoration to home, occasioned so copious an outpour from their eyes, that their productions became too blurred to be deciphered.

One successful writer there was, and that was Willie, who, at the dictation of Mr. Kearas, junior, wrote a very satisfactory account of his condition and progress, dwelling with commendable stress on the exceeding kindness and attention to his daily wants by the principals of the Academy. But, even under such more favourable circumstances for the production of a perfect composition, more than one copy had been spoiled by the unbidden tear, that, before it could be stopped, had perversely fallen upon the untruthful record. His consolation, however, was that his friend would be on the spot to controvert its contents, in addition to which he contrived to write a few lines to Miss Austen, to whom Frendzburgh promised to deliver it, but which, being mysteriously abstracted from his trunk, never reached its destination.

The few days that preceded Frendzburgh's departure not only affected the boys, but permeated the whole establishment, from the schoolmaster downwards, all of whom, save Mr. Grippem, comported themselves towards him with an attention almost embarrassing, vieing with each other in their exhibitions of regard to his comfort and welfare. As for the usher, greatly mortified that the object for whom he had reserved especial tokens of his favour should thus escape without any opportunity of bestowing them upon him, he chafed and sulked, and lost no opportunity of venting his spleen upon the unfortunates whose conduct gave him the semblance of an excuse for so doing; but what tended most to increase his irritation, so far from avoiding him, Frendzburgh, on every occasion of coming in his vicinity, passed him with a superciliousness that not only evidenced the contempt in which he held him, but was a reminder of his impotence.

Notwithstanding this general deference to the envied boy, there was running through the establishment an unexpressed yet uncomfortable sensation that a wrong was being done to the

whole; all felt that, in some way, they were injured by the withdrawal of a boy from the place. To the Messrs. Kearas, including the mistress, and even Tommy and the rest, it presented itself as an innovation upon the established order of things, a dangerous precedent, fraught with possible serious consequences; whilst each boy, except those before referred to, whom deferred hopes had indurated to too great an extent to be affected by such events, in some way felt himself aggrieved at this assumption in claiming a prior right to leave the school before anybody else. Still this undercurrent did not manifest itself in any obnoxious way; its effect, however,—a very natural one,—was to tinge their whole procedure with an air of sadness, and prevent that hilarity that would have been manifested on other occasions. The outward exhibitions of interest in the privileged one were obtrusive and abundant; and from the transient effects, seen in their deportment to one another, one would have imagined the whole school was about taking a final leave of each other, so marvellously had the lions become lambs. Every one was kind, everybody had a pleasant look; and as each shared the coveted smile or cheery word from the favoured boy, he hastened to communicate it to his fellow, and emulated him in the display of a fraternal regard. Perhaps in no other school but one of this type could so altered, although temporary, a state of things have taken place. Not unfrequently did this sudden change operate adversely, proving rather too much for the ill-balanced youths, inciting juniors to an assertion of equality with their seniors, that, on the subsidence of the cause of the irregularity, required a few hard knocks to set right, but it ended there, unless, inspirited by his short respite, as occasionally happened, the crowed-over boy showed fight, and won for himself a higher status amongst his companions.

At length the last day's sojourn at the Academy arrived, and Frendzburgh appeared on the grounds clothed in his bran-new suit, that, notwithstanding the cut thereof was after the same pattern in vogue in Tommy Kaily's early days, really did credit to his skill, and showed that he had bestowed more than ordinary pains in its production. Indeed, that worthy himself appeared surprised at the result of his shears and goose, and insisted upon parading him before the authorities, who shared his admiration, in some measure, however, due to the youth himself, who, as he moved through the playground, elicited but one expression of commendation at his improved appearance, the boys scarcely recognising in the tall handsome lad their old schoolfellow.

No longer amenable to rule or supervision, he took the opportunity of visiting and inspecting places hitherto excluded from, and even took the liberty of making Willie his companion to the village, where the contrast in the appearance of the two attracted attention, and called forth flattering comments on Frendzburgh's manly bearing. In the afternoon, accompanied still by his little friend, he made his farewell visit to the purveyor of crowdies, with whom he had always been a favourite, and took the opportunity of once more commending his young *protegé* to her especial regard, engaging to do his best to keep him in funds to meet any moderate supply in her particular line, at the same time not forgetting the poor lad whose interest in Willie had, ever since that ill-starred flight, involved him, if possible, in extra obloquy and ill-treatment.

Since the day Mape had been set at liberty through the intercession of his fellow-prisoner, he had scarcely ever let Willie out of his sight. At first, in common with the rest of the scholars, he had entertained the idea that Willie was about being removed from the Hall, or in some way so separated from them as would preclude further intercourse, the thought of which affected the boy far more than any additional ill-treatment would have done. But though subsequent disclosures proved the surmise to be erroneous, the effect of the impression made, and the possibility that such might yet turn out correct, caused the lad to hover around him, though with less familiarity, with a stronger attachment than before, for what little of his heart had not been Willie's prior to the escapade, had been entirely surrendered after his impassioned appeal to the elder Kearas for his liberation. Owing to the almost inseparable companionship of the little boy with Trelawney, he had had but rare opportunities of communicating with him, and had been obliged to content himself with observing him at a distance; but he had taken a fresh alarm on the appearance of Frendzburgh in his new outfit, that had become greatly heightened as he saw them cross the green on their way to the village, his unreflecting mind conjuring up the possible idea that they had both left 'for good;' which was only partially relieved, as, watching from the gate, he caught the first glimpse of them as they reappeared at the other end of the green on their return. When, therefore, the two started down the lane to Nanny Miller's, tortured by the same apprehension, Mape followed, creeping along on the other side of the stone wall, now and then peeping over to assure himself that Willie had not,

during the interval of his last gaze, exchanged his Grumbleby rig for one like Trelawney's, every sight of which, as it did the majority of the boys, caused him to regard him with amazement.

On their disappearance into the cottage, he leaped into the road, and approached the garden, into which, after waiting a while, and fearful lest they might return by way of the common, he stealthily entered, retiring to the further end. As he looked up the road along which he and Willie had travelled on the night of his flight, the whole scene presented itself to his imagination, and he became so occupied therewith, that the cottage door had opened, and the two boys appeared thereat, before he had time to bob down behind some gooseberry bushes, too late, however, for the keen eye of Nanny, who, breaking off abruptly from her sage admonitions and counsel to Frendzburgh on his departure, made a sudden dart, that upset Willie, and pounced upon the unlucky wight, and dragged him forward by his ear.

'Consarn thee, up! Can't ta let a daycent body's kail aloan? aw'll pool tha lug oot o' thi yed.'

'Tha needn't thenk aw'd do 'em harm, Mistress Miller,' exclaimed Harfagr, making no effort to relieve the assaulted member.

'Wha bad tha coom to plunner an owd body's kail?'

'Tha's noa need t' fear, Nanny; aw wodn't do 't,' replied Mape, and he looked so appealingly into her face, and then at Willie and Frendzburgh, that the old lady was touched, and, letting go his ear, demanded 'what brought him there, then, a-hiding?'

Mape looked at Willie, as though awaiting his intercession, and then his eyes fell on the ground.

'I am sure,' said the little lad, 'he wouldn't be so bad as that, Nanny.'

Mape raised his eyes, and looked at Willie with a quivering lip.

'Aw'm no' so sure,' rejoined Nanny.

'What were ye at, Mape?' interposed Frendzburgh.

The boy kicked the toe of his iron-shod clog into the frozen ground, looked over at the garden gate, but made no reply.

'Did ye want either of us? Speak out, man.'

Without withdrawing his eyes, and still working with his clogged shoe, he said in a low tone, 'Noa; bud—bud'—

'But what, Mape? what was it? Tell us,' said Willie.

Encouraged by his tone and manner, the boy turned his eyes

to Willie, and, stepping forward, grasped his hand, and in a husky voice exclaimed, 'Luke here, Woolton, ar't goan, lad?' He looked earnestly into his face to read the answer, and squeezed his hand convulsively.

'Going where, Mape? Where would I be going?' replied Willie.

'Hey, lad, then tha'rt no goan?' rejoined the boy eagerly, his eyes kindling, and his countenance lit up with renewed hope.

'Why, what's a matter with ye, Hardfag? Did ye think he was going to run again?' said Trelawney, half reproachfully.

Mape's countenance fell at this reproof, upon which Frendzburgh clapped him on the shoulder, and added, 'No, Mape, Wilton is going to remain a little while longer; there's only myself going just now, at which you'll not be sorry. You won't be bullied any more by me. What hurrahing there'll be to-morrow, when I'm gone! Won't there, eh? Ha, ha!'

'Mister Trelawney,'—the mister was the result of the new clothes,—'there's noan'll be glad; aw've mony a time heeard 'em say 't. Doan't t' see a'most all on 'em's a lukkin heavy-loike. Aw doan't see 'at'll coom o' t' young uns.'

'Oh, nonsense!' exclaimed Trelawney, making an unsuccessful effort to laugh off the rising emotion that Mape's words were calling up, and then pushing him towards the open door, added, 'There, go in there, and if you don't swallow down that crowdy, see if I don't pay you out. Smother it well with treacle, Mrs. Miller.'

Mape was confused; the mention of a crowdy smothered with treacle appealed with such force to the animal nature that it quite conflicted with the emotional. Yielding instinctively to the cravings of the former, he entered the cottage, followed by Nanny to the door, where she was arrested by Frendzburgh shouting, 'Good-bye, Mrs. Miller,' and whereat the honest old dame returned to repeat the hugging that had taken place in the cottage, and to remind him of her counsel and warnings, adding,

'Hey! bud tha'lt noa mind tha of an owd madlin when tha gets t' yon gran' toon, nor nowt 'at aw tel't tha. There, gie's thi han' agen;' and again he submitted to Nanny's embrace, who continued watching him until he and Willie had receded from her view. Too full to converse, she set to work at her purveyance, and laid before Mape a crowdy, bathed in an extra allowance of treacle for Frendzburgh's sake, which the hungry lad lost no time in despatching, and then set off to once more

feast his eyes on Willie and his companion, hardly yet satisfied that he was not about being separated from both, so intimately did the two appear associated. Licking his lips, the particles that still adhered thereto being too precious to transfer to his coat sleeve, he hurried along, until, regaining the playground, he saw the two boys at a short distance, and was about to turn aside, when, to his delight, Frendzburgh beckoned him to advance. Mape ambled towards them with a shy look, and a grin that seemed to extend from ear to ear, and which in its extension dilated the broad nostrils of his dumpy nose, that took its rise at a respectable distance from his staring, heavy eyes. It was an epoch in Harfagr's hard lot. The hero of the hour, whose smile at all times was a joy, and his countenance a protection, but from whom, at such a time, a passing notice created a Grumbleby paradise, was singling him out for special notice; he hesitated, but a shout to look sharp assured him that it was real. Unable to conceal his delight, he did not try.

'I s'pose you know I'm off to-morrow, Mape?' said Frendzburgh, as, with his hand leaning on his shoulder, he walked towards the beck in company with him and Willie. 'It's not likely I'll ever see ye again.' The gleam of sunshine that had lit up the boy's face on his joining them was gone. 'I suppose you mean to stay here all your life?' Harfagr nodded assent. 'Where did you come from, Mape?' Mape looked at his questioner for a moment or two, and then repeated the words 'come from?' 'Yes, where did you come from?'

'O hey! Aw coomed fra Nanny's.'

'O yes! I know that,' said Trelawney, laughing, in which Willie joined, whilst Mape looked foolish, 'and got your crowdy, I hope?'

Harfagr licked his lips, and nodded his head with a grin.

'I mean, where did you live before you came to this place?'

Mape was puzzled and hesitated, but, remembering that most boys said they came from home, he concluded that he must have come from the same place, and accordingly, though in a somewhat doubtful tone, suggested that *locality*, but, perceiving that he had provoked another smile, he immediately corrected himself, and exclaimed,

'Noa, noa, aw mean, aw coom'd—aw coom'd'—he buried his fingers in his towsy head, and after a few hard digs thereat continued, 'Aw'm blow'd ef aw knaws whar aw coom'd. Whar was't, Mister Trelawney?'

'Were you ever in any other house living before you lived here?' inquired Willie, wishing to assist him.

'Hey! in coorse aw wur—bud aw's forgotten; bud aw knaws 'at aw've mony a toim wisht aw'd never coom'd here.'

'Well, I'm going to London, Mape: have you any friends there?'

'Noa—ees—aw cuddan't swear aw hadden't.'

'Never mind. You've been here a long time, Mape. Why, you're getting to be an old chap!'

'Egow! dost thenk 't?' Mape grinned and felt complimented.

'I'll tell you what I want you to do when I'm gone. I know you like Wilton here.'

Harfagr looked over at Willie and grinned, and then, recollecting their unfortunate adventure, appealed to him, and said, 'Aw did na tell tha t' run, Woolton, nah, yon toime?'

'No, no, he's told me all about that,' interposed Frendzburgh, 'we won't mind that now. I'll tell you what I want. You're such an old hand here, why, you ought to be cock-o'-the-wharf.'

'Dost thenk soa?'

'Yes, and you're strong enough, only you've let them crow over you; but take my advice, stand your ground once or twice, and they'll soon let you alone, and get afraid of you too.' Mape bristled up, shook his head, and said he would. 'And then,' continued Trelawney, 'I want you take charge of Wilton.'

Harfagr's eyes glistened, and he strode over to the boy's side and put his arm round his neck, as though at once to assume the task.

'Mind,' resumed Trelawney, with a smile of approval, 'you're always to take his part, and not let him be bullied too much, not even by Aslem.'

'Aslem!' replied the boy, a little disconcerted, 'Aslem! aw doot aw munnot meddle wi' yon.'

'Oh, I'll keep out of his way,' said Willie, 'never fear.'

'Hey, so do!' ejaculated Harfagr. 'Bud mebbe Woolton an' aw cud feyt 'im—hey, Woolton?'

Willie shook his head, and intimated that he never meant to fight again if he could help it.

'Aw knaw, then, aw'll getten Bubbs to stick ba ma, an' wu'll do ahr best.'

Frendzburgh assented, quite satisfied it would take the two, if not a third, to master the party named; just then he was informed by one of the boys that he was wanted by Mrs. Kearas

to assist in packing his trunk, whereupon the three separated. Willie wandered through the archway into the plantation, now bared of leaves, and made his way down the frozen pathway to the river to indulge in his sorrowful thoughts; whilst Harfagr, raised to some importance by the confidence reposed in him, strutted about the playground, shaking his fist in more than one boy's face, until, happening to come in contact with Bubbs, whose services he had contemplated enlisting in defence of his *protegé*, he saluted him in such a tone of authority, that the boy, who, in common with the generality of the school, was in the habit of exacting obedience from him, grabbed him by the collar, and was about pitching into him, when Mape wrested himself from his grasp, and, throwing off his coat, showed fight. The boy was taken aback by such rare, though not unprecedented conduct, but was instantly restored by a blow from Harfagr, that sent him head over heels. Delighted at his success, he thereupon danced around him in such an extraordinary state of excitement, that, quickly rising, the boy took to his heels, Mape after him, both leaping the wall into the 'Long Close' at the same moment, where they came to a stand. As the affair had been witnessed by some of the boys, a chase ensued, and soon a ring was formed, and the other, as usual, encouraged to pay out the audacious rebel. The contest was short. Flushed with his newly-acquired trust, that he was determined to prove himself worthy of, and for the first time becoming sensible of his own prowess and strength, Mape dealt such rapid and hard blows, that, completely unprepared for such an exhibition, not only his antagonist, but even his backers, grew fainter in their demonstrations, and Bubbs gave in, acknowledging that Harfagr had beat, whereupon, unable to restrain his delight, to the astonishment of the wild boys around, he threw his arms around his vanquished schoolmate, and, after a few impassioned hugs, dragged him to the beck, where he washed his disfigured face before attending to himself, and at the conclusion shook hands with him, and the two mutually pledged that they'd stick by one another thenceforth through thick and thin. Thus, earlier than he had anticipated, had Harfagr literally conquered a friend, and though in a very novel way, perhaps in a more reliable mode than any that would have been equally successful or lasting amongst such a self-asserting community; the reliability on the friendship resting in a stronger motive than might be supposed to ordinarily move a Grumbleby.

As soon as Harfagr had completed his ablution at the beck,

he hastened in search of Willie, of whom he considered he had now earned the title of protector, but, unable to find him, he loitered about the window and door of the kitchen, until he caught a glimpse of Trelawney, at that moment in the hands of the schoolmistress, who was exerting her ingenuity to induce the collar of the shirt that he was to put on in the morning to meet, but which, having originally belonged to a youth of smaller dimensions, she was experiencing some difficulty in accomplishing. As during the process Mrs. Kearas was standing with her back to the door, she was not aware of Mape's presence in the outer room. Grinning with delight at his recent victory, which he was impatient to communicate to Frendzburgh, he commenced making certain signs, squaring at him with double fists, striking out, and then punching his own face, now rendered additionally attractive by the two blackened eyes and increased size of his nasal, at the conclusion whereof, unable to restrain himself, he shouted, 'Aw'm cock, aw drubbed 'im!' and, alarmed at his temerity, instantly decamped. Startled by the words, Mrs. Kearas shouted too, and ran the pin into Frendzburgh's neck, who in his turn cried out, causing the two artisans to cease their work, and, equally alarmed, demand of one another what was the matter. A search in the outer room did not tend to solve the mystery; and as Frendzburgh declined any further effort on the part of Mrs. Kearas to coax the refractory collar to meet, it was given up, and afresh search made for another shirt.

On retiring for the night, the privileged new boy's bed was again pressed upon Frendzburgh, as it had been the last few nights, but declined, as he preferred sleeping in the long room, in the old corner that he had occupied ever since he entered the school, that he might hold his last talk with his schoolfellows, from whom,—strange contradiction!—he had, day and night, heartily desired to be separated, but just as the longed-for hour arrived, now experienced a clinging to and an unaccountable weight at leaving.

Until a late hour, groups of boys, in their shirts, from each room, surrounded his bed, repeating their commissions, or expressing their regrets and sorrow at his departure. Gradually, however, as the night advanced, the number became less, until, finally, the last two or three bade him good-night, and soon all had dropped off to sleep, to dream, perhaps, of home.

As a special favour, Willie was allowed to sleep with his friend the last night, though not entirely with Harfagr's consent, who

deemed his title slightly infringed by this proceeding, besides having a vague fear revived, that, after all, he might be going away with Trelawney in the morning.

Although poor Mape was, as we have just seen, unable to give any account of his antecedents to Trelawney, yet, not having earlier referred thereto, before closing this chapter it may not be out of place to make a further effort to ascertain or note what was known or surmised by his fellow-scholars in relation to him.

The popular opinion was that he had been at the Grumbleby institution time immemorial, but, seeing he was not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, this must be accepted with the limitation of being bounded by the recollections of those next longest there in succession to himself. Oblivious to the mode by which he came to be styled Harfagr or Mape, he, in common with the rest, knew he had always been called Hardfag, doubtless from its propinquity to the original, and its appositeness to the extra amount of 'fagging' exacted of him by all hands. If, for the want of further evidence of his ancestry, we yield to our imaginations, possibly he was a direct descendant of Harold Haarfagr, the first king of Norway; in which case it would not be difficult to conceive that the language of that primitive sovereign's jailor, Rogerwald, as addressed to the son, Turf Eirrar, on sending the ill-starred boy away to seek his fortune, had become equally applicable to his descendant, and which, according to Mr. Carlyle, ran thus:—'It were best if thou never camest back, for I have small hope that thy people will have honour by thee.' In pursuance whereof Mape never had gone back.

But with regard to his ignorance of the paternal dwelling-place, Mape's was not an isolated case; there were others of his schoolfellows who would have found it as difficult to name such 'local habitation' as himself. Indeed, had the Grumbleby miscellany been suddenly disbanded, 'some of them,' to again quote from the same author, when speaking of the heterogeneous components of a certain Cromwellian brigade, 'might have required passes to Ethiopia;' but, as he also suggests, go where they might, no doubt, when turned adrift, the majority would give a good account of themselves, and exemplify their teaching.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE START FOR LONDON.

'OOP, lod, oop!' whispered Tommy Kaily, who, as the readiest to wake, had been commissioned to call the master and servants at an early hour, and now stood at the bedside of Frendzburgh, with a lighted candle in his hand. The lad, however, required a hearty shake or two before he responded to the old tailor's demand.

'Eh, what's a matter?' responded Frendzburgh, as he opened his eyes and stretched himself at full length. 'That you, Tommy? Why, it's dark yet, old fellow!'

'Hush, mon! In coorse it's dark; aw'll lev ye the leet. Doan't mak' nooise to waken them young moppets, bud mak' haste doan;' saying which Tommy left the room, but not without an effort to resist the temptation to which the half-covered bodies of one or two, or the bare limbs hanging out of the beds, would at any other time have provoked him.

Frendzburgh rose and dressed, an operation which the cold, raw morning assisted in accelerating, and descended with the light into the parlour, where Mr. and Mrs. Kearas awaited him before a rousing fire, on the hob of which the teapot was steaming, and in front a plate of buttered toast and a dish of beefsteak. As he entered the room, with a heartiness most refreshing, the two worthies rose and grasped his hands, and inquired with much solicitude after his health, and how he slept; and then, seated at the table, proceeded to assist him, and load his plate in a most unorthodox way, and urged on him the necessity of eating, and not yielding to his feelings, that they were well aware must be as greatly moved as were their own, on this most heart-rending occasion, and which the greatly-affected lady substantiated by applying the ends of the kerchief, pinned across her breast, to her eyes, and giving vent to several hysterical sobs and cries.

This excess, however, in nowise interfered with the appetite of the schoolmaster, who, taking advantage of the unusual occurrence of beef-steak for breakfast, transferred the lion's share to his own plate during the paroxysm of his better half, but very wisely stopping in the process of mastication, to grunt a response to each affectionate epithet and remark respecting the admirable youth about to be torn from her breaking heart, and for whom she was only now discovering the profundity of her love. But as Mrs. Kearas paused to ascertain the extent of the effect of her emotions, she was yet more strongly moved at observing that Mr. Kearas was in the act of helping himself to the last piece of steak, whereat, making a sudden grab at it with her own fork as it reached his plate, she demanded of that individual, in an altered tone, if he weren't going to let her have a morsel; and forthwith vented the residue of her unburdened heart upon his luckless head.

Mr. Kearas having been allowed sufficient time to recover, and which was during Mrs. Kearas' disposal of the coveted morsel, that gentleman, at the instigation of his wife, addressed his departing pupil on the great privilege that had been his, to have been one of the limited number (limited by the supply) received into the establishment, and permitted to graduate at so renowned a hall of learning, offering advantages that no rival institution could pretend to, and of which, he was happy to say (and had so informed the surgeon), he had availed himself to so great a degree of proficiency as to be a credit to his preceptors, and thereby enabled to at once enter upon the study of medicine, without passing through any other college or university; at which point Mrs. Kearas interrupted to make known to him (his ignorance whereof until that moment not speaking well for his penetration) how this was in great measure owing to her incessant watchfulness and instructions, both to her son and Mr. Grippem, to spare no pains, by kind and assiduous conduct and attention, to conduce to such a result; again alluding to her great regard for him, and the conviction that she would never be able to endure the trying ordeal of parting, at which thought she once more went off into a fit of sobs and cries, but which was brought to a premature close by the announcement that the gig was ready, and the trunk duly stowed. Thereupon Tommy made his appearance with a greatcoat that had been taken from the store-room, and altered to fit, but which required some hard coaxing to get on.

All being now pronounced in readiness, Mrs. Kearas went through the contemplated harrowing scene, throwing her arms passionately around Trelawney's neck, and smothering his face with kisses; until, as she had predicted, unable to bear up under the overpowering weight, she tore herself from him, and disappeared into the kitchen to seek consolation, whilst preparing the hasty pudding for the morning's repast, in the thought that she had yet some dear boys to care for.

As Frendzburgh turned to follow Mr. Kearas through the dark passage, he found himself grasped by the arm, and in passionate tones Willie exclaimed, 'Oh, Fren! Fren! what'll I do now you are gone?'

'Oh! you'll get on all right,' responded Frendzburgh, endeavouring to conceal an emotion that Mrs. Kearas' exhibition had failed to excite. 'I'll do all I can for you, Willie.'

'Oh, do! do! give Aunty the letter, and tell them to send for me right off, and write me directly you get home.'

'Never fear, old boy, I won't forget, you'll see; cheer up, man.'

'Measter's waitin',' said Tommy, putting his head in at the door.

'I am coming, Tommy. Good-bye, Willie;' and, grasping his hand and patting him cheerily on the back, he was hurrying out of the entry, when a low voice said,

'Good-bye, Master Trelawney.'

'Oh! is that you, Milly? good-bye,—sorry to leave you.' As he shook her hand hastily he added, 'Be kind to Willie,' and emerged into the yard, where he found Mr. Kearas seated in the conveyance awaiting him, and who urged him to 'make haste.'

'Come, boy, day's breaking, and we've no time to lose.'

Frendzburgh halted a moment to take leave of Tommy and Jurdy, whose regret at his departure was genuine, and then took his seat by the side of the schoolmaster, and soon Grumbleby Hall, with all its harvest of sorrow, receded for ever from his sight, though never from his remembrance, for, despite the overlapping momentous incidents of after life,

> 'Still on those scenes the memory wakes,
> And fondly broods with miser care;
> Time but the impression deeper makes,
> As streams their channel deeper wear.'

And how differently will they then present themselves! Strange perversity! the wand of time will transmute much of the gall and

wormwood into honey and sweetness, and extract the sting and the rankling thorn from the festering puncture. With what other sensations and judgments have many of Trelawney's school-fellows since referred to those days of unmitigated evil, even until they have become the subjects of emotions akin to pleasure.

The dark, deep lines (and which some would *literally* bear to the end of their days), softened down by distance, and, it may be, the severe experience of riper years, have reminded of hardships, but they have been filtered into heroic endurance or minified into trifles,—the excessive agony glossed over to give prominence to the daring exploits, the wondrous escapades, and the marvellous feats of those schoolboy days. How many a time since have they been reproduced with a fictitious charm, and invested with an interest wondrously foreign to the actual experience.

One feature of these establishments, if not a redeeming one, yet by no means insignificant, was that many of the boys thereat laid the foundation of a character that in after-life asserted itself in high physical courage and endurance, and that, in the sharp collision of minds striving for the mastery, enabled them in a protracted contest to force their way past those taught by a less rude experience, and fitted them to cope with the oppositions of a subsequent career. Some notable instances there were, in after days, in which such did rise to eminence in their selected walks,—men who not only had the energy to execute, but also the wisdom to plan.

Whilst thus digressing, we cannot forego the temptation to refer to another circumstance, from its apparent bearing on these scholastic institutions.

It was just at this period, the epoch of our tale, that the justly celebrated John Marshall of Darlington, subsequently a member of Parliament, came into repute. In conjunction with Mr. Matthew Murray of Stockton, he had previously introduced flax spinning machinery, and brought this branch of trade to great perfection, becoming the most successful manufacturer in the world, and giving a great impetus to the linen trade. But his chief title to a deserved prominence was his liberal patronage of the school system known as the Lancasterian, and his example as the founder of schools for work-people. In the light of his popularity, he was now attracting general attention by his advocacy of popular education according to the system named, and in furtherance thereof had delivered a lecture at Leeds on

the state of education in England, in which, amongst other novelties, he urged the substitution of moral suasion for the birch.

It was also about this period that the University of London arose. Hence, coupled with concurrent events of a similar nature, it was for the first time asserted that the schoolmaster was abroad; which occasioned some simpletons, or wise ones, to insist that, in view of the great ignorance of the masses just then being more glaringly exposed, it would have been more creditable to him had he remained at home. But did not both the one and the other thereby display an unpardonable amount of ignorance? The schoolmaster abroad!—a little better acquaintance with the facts would have tended to their enlightenment, and have led to the discovery of his especial proximity in the adjoining county. Grieved at his country's devotion to the acquisition of wealth, intensified by the growing importance of her manufactures and consequent extension of commerce, to the exclusion of all else, he had, as in days of yore, retired to the nooks and crannies of the land; this time, however, situated on the boundaries of Yorkshire and Durham, whither he had, despite the aforesaid counter influence, attracted a host of other schoolmasters, who had flocked there until they had become as numerous as rooks in a rookery; and whence, for some years, monopolists of all the learning in the kingdom, they were, with praiseworthy disinterestedness, dispensing the same at the astonishingly small charge of twenty pounds per annum, including board and clothing, no extras and no holidays,—examples of self-abnegation rarely met with in these degenerate days.

But alas for them, if not for an ingrate country! in unison with the aforesaid newly-awakened zeal, arose those schoolmasters, not phœnix-like out of the ashes of the Yorkshiremen whom they supplanted, but from across the border to the west of that county, accompanied by another newly-evoked entity, the 'march of intellect,' and as they marched hand-in-hand, they peeped into these hitherto mysterious and secret halls, and brought to light the secrets of the prison-houses of learning.

In their rivalry, and aided by that renowned educationist, Mr. Squeers, they ruthlessly threw open the doors of the Grumbleby, Pshawby, and Dotheboys institutions, together with their numerous imitators, and, acting on the principle of the old saw, that if you ding down the nests the rooks will fly away, let loose upon a thankless public the incarcerated innocents before they had

finished their course, or, more correctly, before the course had finished them.

More than fifty years have elapsed, and where now shall we find the Yorkshire schoolmaster? Like him of the *Deserted Village*,

> 'Past is all his fame; the very spot
> Where many a time he triumphed is forgot.'

But to our tale. The beams of the morning sun, occasionally obscured by the rising mist, were gradually appearing above the horizon of a grey, low-lying sky, as, awakened from his disturbed sleep, Harfagr was the first to ascertain that Frendzburgh had gone, the announcement of which soon awoke the rest, since all had intended to witness the departure. A general rush was made to the windows, but as, on reference to Willie, whose eyes testified to his grief since the return to his deserted bed, they learned he had left more than an hour ago, they returned to their beds, to indulge in a short forgetfulness of their own less favoured condition, or ponder over the still inexplicable reason why it was not one of themselves that had been sent for; one boy very confidently informing his bedfellow that he knew he'd be the next, but which was very indignantly resented, the said bedfellow, being the bigger, digging his elbow into his side, and informing him he'd better not say that again.

'Warn't he here afore him? Then of course he'd leave first.'

Others, again, who had long ceased to entertain any hope of a region beyond, resigned to their fate, lay concocting schemes of evil portent. To these, by way of compensation for their highly commendable resignation, might have been tendered the consoling consideration that they were not alone in such abandonment, since, as a poet informs us, over the gates of another place of 'durance vile' is inscribed: 'Who enters here leaves hope behind.' But then the study of the poets did not form part of the Grumbleby curriculum, consequently they were, in their prosaic course, deprived of any consolation that might have been derived from an acquaintance with such reassuring language.

The sharp morning air soon began to tell on the finger-ends and toes of Mr. Kearas and his charge, compelling occasional stamping and beating of hands and feet; and as 'old Fan' was kept at an accelerated speed, the steaming vapour from her sides and nostrils, as it rose, was driven by the cold wind against the travellers. Shrugging their necks into their coat-collars, that they

raised around their ears, and lowering their heads in front, they pursued their course without entering into conversation, or exchanging any words beyond occasionally informing each other that it was cold, until they arrived at Greta Bridge, at the tavern in which place Mr. Kearas drew up. Here the schoolmaster informed his companion that it was essential, for the comfort of his inner man, that he should procure something to keep out the cold; accordingly he disposed of a tumbler of warm gin and water, with the exception of a very small allowance that he tendered to Frendzburgh, assuring him that it would warm the cockles of his heart, whatever that meant. Upon which assurance, in imitation of Mr. Kearas, he essayed to toss off the potation in the same off-hand manner, but as speedily ejected it by a fit of coughing, much to the regret of the schoolmaster, who deplored the loss more than the effect. The result promised, however, was none the less, judging from the colour that mounted to his face, and the vibrations throughout his frame from the coughing, that now and again returned. A rather unpromising essay this at dram-drinking, of which it was the initiation, although by no means exceptional with beginners, nor any assurance that the attempt would not be repeated, and with better success and less fear of its going the wrong way next time.

After a few hours' drive, the monotony of which was duly relieved by casual stoppages for the like purpose of obtaining further supplies of the caloric stimulant, but in which Frendzburgh stoutly declined all participation, quite satisfied with the quantity already imbibed, St. Cuthbert's appeared in sight, and the chaise drew up at an inn in Darlington, whence Frendzburgh was to be despatched by stage to London.

On entering the inn, Mr. Kearas' spirits, in addition to the elevation they had attained by his imbibing on the road, were further raised by finding that he was about to be more than compensated for the loss of his pupil, by having to take back with him two others, who awaited his arrival at the inn, a circumstance that also proved that the *prestige* of Grumbleby was not yet on the wane.

There being ample time, Mr. Kearas, accompanied by Frendzburgh and the two new boys, sallied off to see this 'new thing in the earth,' the inception of an undertaking that was to eclipse all other modes of travel, even excelling the hitherto unrivalled macadamized highways, in comparison with which the great Roman roads, whose traces abound in those northern counties,

were held to have been inferior. The Stockton and Darlington railroad, extending from the former town to the latter, a distance of about twenty-five miles, had been lately opened, and was the talk of the whole land and beyond. Despite powerful opposition and almost insuperable difficulties, the novel work had progressed, in one shape and the other, since 1821, amid predictions of failure, and woes sufficient in magnitude to have deterred and quailed less indomitable men than George Stephenson and his unwavering patron, Edward Pease. The latter, a much honoured name in this locality, indeed throughout England, whether in the person of Joseph, member of Parliament for South Durham, and ever celebrated as one of the noble band that supported Wilberforce in his persevering efforts, ultimately crowned with success, for the manumission of slaves, or in the subsequent bearers of a name so redolent of Christian virtues and noted for benevolent enterprise. Edward, apart from his being a pioneer of the railway movement, was himself also prominent in the educational agitation above alluded to; which suggests the possibility that he had learned something of the strange anomalies that existed not far from his own door, and that had rapidly sprung up, and were fast multiplying, occasioning a rather unenviable notoriety for that portion of the counties on which they bordered, for although the localities in which they were situated had been selected with particular reference to their remoteness from observation, it was not possible that so much light could be hid, and may therefore have additionally stirred his philanthropic heart, and urged him to rescue or entice learning from its seclusion.

In common with most others, on their first sight of this very novel contrivance, Mr. Kearas and his pupils looked on with incredulity and amazement as the train moved slowly away towards Stockton. It consisted, besides a few waggons for the conveyance of freight, of a stage-coach for passengers called the 'Experiment,' having seats at both ends to face *the horses*, so hard was it to entirely part with old ideas.

Having completed his survey of the astounding innovation, the schoolmaster returned to the hotel, to unite with other wise ones in protesting against the most gigantic folly of the age, all of whom, as they pledged one another in their favourite beverages, coincided with the sage old lady who is reported to have declared, when she saw the cavalcade move along the line unassisted by a single quadruped, 'It would never do,—it were

going agen' baith God and natur'.' To which prophetic utterance the learned Mr. Kearas added, what was possibly intended for a pun, and probably provoked by his indignation at the other movement emanating from the same source, 'That it was all of a *piece* with those other doings of the same individual.'

They had not long returned to the inn, when a sudden rush to the door, and commotion within and without, announced the arrival of the stage-coach, whereupon Mr. Kearas, in the presence of his new scholars and the persons in the bar-room, delivered himself of an oration, in which he once more endeavoured to impress upon Frendzburgh and his hearers the superlative benefit that had resulted to the former from his lengthened stay at Grumbleby, and which he had done with so much credit to himself and an institution that, in the art of conveying instruction, eclipsed all new-fangled notions or systems,—a proceeding that seemed to cause a very profound sensation, both in the minds of the new pupils and the audience, the latter of whom felicitated the new victims upon their good fortune in falling into such hands, and to which they were additionally incited by Mr. Kearas ordering another glass apiece for the most vociferous in their laudations.

At the conclusion thereof, Mr. Kearas entrusted two letters to Frendzburgh, addressed to Messrs. Hawkes and Scarr, to whom he desired his affectionate greetings, at the same time, in accordance with instructions, handed him a sovereign for his expenses on the road, and then saw him to his seat on the coach. There he again attracted the attention of a few loiterers by a reiteration of his former eulogium, with the additional assurance of the deep interest he should ever take in his success in a profession in which he was fitted to shine, from the peculiar and unusual advantages he had had at Grumbleby (a name he repeated more than once, together with its location, for the information of those around him). After which, on referring to his own personal feelings at parting with one so beloved, and whom he should never fail to point out as a model to his equally privileged schoolmates, he became so affected that he was compelled to retire to—his gin and water.

During those proceedings, an equally important personage, the driver of the stage, was tossing off his additional glass of hot brandy and water for the same praiseworthy reason as induced Mr. Kearas on his journey to resort to its cognate, namely, to keep out the cold, and was in the act of wishing

success 'to old Pease and t'other luneys,' before taking the last swig, as Mr. Kearas entered, who thereupon joined in, and at the conclusion united in the loud horse-laugh the foregoing reference occasioned. All being announced in readiness, the several passengers having taken their places, the coachman gathered up the ribbons in his left hand, and made one or two attempts to mount his box, in which he was retarded by the weight of his seven-caped drab overcoat, but finally succeeded. Arrived at the top, he gave a word of recognition to the fortunate sharer of his seat, and then proceeded to leisurely wrap the ample folds of his coat around himself, and draw the leather apron over his and his fellow-passenger's knees. The slamming of the coach door intimated that the last old lady had been shoved inside by an officious porter, whereat the nimble guard sang out, 'All right!' and vaulted into his seat behind, a proceeding that set the horses prancing and swaying backward and forward, held on to by the strong grasp of the stablemen, until the official on the box had very artistically squared his arms, turned down his wrists, and threaded the reins through his fingers, and finally thrown out his long whip-lash, arresting it with a crack over the heads of the two leaders that caused them to start and rear, and in another second off ambled and pranced the three bays and a chestnut, their rugs dexterously remaining in the ostlers' grasp by a legerdemain peculiar to themselves. All of which elicited the admiration of the numerous hangers-on always present to witness 'the start,' and who stood looking after the team until out of sight, when, as it disappeared, they mutually agreed that it would beat all the coaches on the road, let alone old P's 'speriment, the designation, as already stated, given to the carriage in which the passengers were conveyed along the railroad.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE ARRIVAL.

THE journey to London, although at this period long and wearisome, and withal at this season of the year a very cold and undesirable one, combined such a diversity of scenery and objects of interest, all of a novel character to Frendzburgh, that the additional exhilaration of spirits thereby occasioned in a great measure distracted his attention from these drawbacks, besides which, he was too well inured to exposure to suffer to the same extent as his fellow-passengers.

The great north road, as it ran through the several counties, presented a continued panorama of hills and dales, along valleys, through villages, and past solitary houses, as well as bustling towns teeming with life. Extensive landscapes, whose physical features, improved by culture and art, even in winter could not fail to attract and call forth admiration, were so continually inviting his attention, that, except when night shut them out from view, he never wearied in plying his fellow-travellers with questions in relation thereto; but as the majority were taken up and put down at various stages along the line, they were scarcely long enough with him to enable the inquisitive boy to become sufficiently familiar to obtain more than brief information, the only through passengers, excepting one, a stranger to the route, being the insides. His frank bearing, however, soon melted down the reticence of the new-comers, who became as insensibly drawn into conversation as their predecessors. Even the hearty, bluff driver, as the boy sat on the seat behind, became so taken with his intelligent young passenger, whose hardihood so bravely bore him up against wind and storm, which now and again overtook them, that he insisted on throwing one of his extra wrappers around him, and, on the box seat being vacated, invited him to that much-coveted post, to the advantage and enjoyment of both.

This special interest in Frendzburgh was manifested still more by the pains he took to vary his ordinary phraseology, in repeating his stock descriptions of the several places of note along the road, and thereby threw an extra spiciness into his relation, a course that had a reactionary effect; as, in response to his inquiries, the coachman became equally interested and amused by the relation of some of the incidents in Frendzburgh's late school life.

One or two of these adventures appeared to approach so near to the marvellous, that coachee more than once regarded his young friend with a suspicious look. This, probably, was induced not alone by their wonderful nature, but from the fact of his being himself accustomed to *embellish*, whilst endeavouring to astonish his hearers by his own feats on the road, in which, therefore, he did not care to be excelled. But what chiefly won upon him was the great interest shown by the lad in the several relays of horses, as he listened and tried to comprehend the coachman's fancy description of the particular merits of each; and, on lowering himself to the ground, as they pulled up at the roadside inns, to stretch himself or await the change of team, he more than once called the attention of the guard to the clever manner in which the youngster held the ribbons, and thereupon declared that 'he'd make his mark in Lunnon, and would bet a quart he'd rise to be Lord Mayor's coachman afore many years, if he didn't finally supplant himself as driver of the Tally-ho;' at the conclusion of which assertion, being interrupted in any further statement as to what he would rise to by the pewter pot having reached his lips, he would, after a good swig himself thereout, hand it to Frendzburgh, and insist on his drinking too. His regard was still further increased by the alacrity with which the lad descended from the box to adjust a bearing rein, or re-hook a loose trace to the whipple-tree, or even adroitly hoist a horse's leg by the fetlock, and with a stone knock out a flint that had jammed between the iron and the frog, and then remount so nimbly, just as the impatient horses were on the start, as to elicit a fresh burst of admiration from the expert old whip, who would thereupon congratulate Frendzburgh upon his prospect of one day cutting him out, as he was getting too old and stiff to hold out for long.

But the distance was shortening, and as they rattled along the road after the last change, Frendzburgh was struck by the increased number of vehicles of all descriptions. Every now

and again the driver of the Tally-ho exchanged salutes with brother jarvies of similar vehicles, mostly outward bound, by the elevation of the butt of his whip-handle, or a flourish of his whip. Soon the buildings were at less intervals, until they appeared to be continuous, and foot-passengers and vehicles were more numerous; and as, on these accounts, the coachman required to give more attention to his horses, Frendzburgh had leisure to make his observations thereon in silence. As they wended their way without any diminution of speed, he soon became sensible of a murky heaviness in the atmosphere, contrasting unfavourably with the bracing clear air through which the greater part of his journey had been performed; and now, as the twilight faded away, which had succeeded to the blue haze said to be so peculiar to the metropolis, the lighted lamps along the side-walks, and the blazing, smoky, train-oil glare, from open green-groceries, coal-shops, vendors of miscellaneous articles, and a variety of other trades, attracted his notice, until a muffled sound like the rumbling of distant thunder fell upon his ears, succeeded by a sharp clattering, as, in another instant, the vehicle was rattling over the paved street. Deafened by the noise, the few words addressed to him by the driver, when pointing out any particular object deemed worthy his notice, were only guessed at, and eventually any further attempt at conversation ceased. Then followed a shouting and turmoil, as they drove along the busy thoroughfare, lined on each side by glazed shop-fronts, some lighted with gas, others with oil; and again a few with open fronts, as butchers' shops, fishmongers, greengrocers, and the like, whose marts of trade were illuminated by double-spouted train-oil cans, amid whose lurid smoke the owners stood, inviting customers by incomprehensible cries, having reference to the particular commodities or edibles to be disposed of at their enticing repositories.

In the midst of these attractions, Frendzburgh's attention was directed to two urchins, that at first sight brought back with keenness the remembrance of the place he had quitted. They were not, however, Grumblebys, but of the class designated in these days Arabs; not, it is presumed, because they came either from the desert or the more fertile lands of Arabia, nor from any resemblance to the natives thereof, but rather because they appeared to inherit the decree that their hand should be against every man, but in their case partly the result of every man's hand being against them.

As the stage rocked over the stones, these juvenile Ishmaelites darted from out of one of the alley-ways, the favourite haunts of the tribe, and ran with frantic speed after it, but as their hands are also at times against each other, so it happened on this occasion; the one in advance, foreseeing he would soon be outstripped in the race, threw himself down before the other, and, as a consequence, his comrade went flying head-over-heels, bringing up in the gutter, from which he rose in rather a pitiful condition, whilst the other jumped up and continued his course with every prospect now of being the winner. But, true to his instincts, and not to be outwitted, the discomfited one set up a cry of 'Cut, cut behind!' whereupon the guard commenced making sundry lunges with his horn, until, possessing himself of one of the leather straps not then in use, a succession of well-directed strokes about the shoulders and head of the boy, who by this time had succeeded in climbing up behind, caused the wild youth to drop from his perch and make for the first puddle.

'Oh, if you do!' shouted the guard, as he shook his horn at the vicious lad, and covered his person with his arm, but which would not have saved him had he not instantly ducked as the handful of mud came bang against the other side of the seat, on the breast of a passenger, who thereupon rose, but was quickly jolted back into his seat, and joined the guard in making certain savage demonstrations, by which his assailant was led to understand how much they would like to get hold of him, and which were duly acknowledged by sundry signs, equally intelligible.

Frendzburgh, who had witnessed the proceeding, was somewhat puzzled, he being under the impression that the boy had been anxious to make a communication that might have been of service.

During this little episode, the coachman, holding his steeds well in hand, threaded his way through the still more crowded streets, now and again deviating his course to escape a threatened jam, or, with his feet planted firmly on the foot-board, pulling his leaders suddenly round to avoid running over some toddling old lady, on whom, as she continued to cross unconscious of her danger, he bestowed a hearty blessing or two. As they wended their way, the improving thoroughfares, with the attractive displays in the shop-windows, as well as the recurring public structures, told that they were reaching the heart of the great Babylon, and silently and almost bewildered, Frendzburgh, in common with the

rest of the passengers, gazed around; the former the subject of sensations of admiration and wonder at the apparent Babel confusion, and yet through which both pedestrians and vehicles appeared to move without entanglement or collision. Anon the smoking horses danced nervously onward, tossing their heads to ascertain if they had a free rein, and then impatiently champing at the torturing bit, that, wielded by a strong and powerful arm, alone held them in check, and restrained the frothing beasts from dashing off at full speed toward the well-known termination of their day's work. Now off at a sharp trot, they reach the turn into a narrower street before that smart brother whip of the rival team, and round they spin, as the long-thonged whip cracks over the shaking ears of the two fore horses, who, as intended by the driver, put their heads together for a run at last, but are instantly baulked therein by that butcher boy dashing recklessly in with his lighter cart in time to get ahead, and thereby check their usually accelerated speed along this street. Another corner, and the clanging horn of the guard warns off a brewer's dray; and turning, with beautiful precision of step and dexterous curve of wheel, between the narrow opening afforded by the said dray and the large stone sunk in the gutter to protect the lamp-post, off they go cantering, and swaying, and pricking their ears in concert with the prolonged sound of the horn of the stalwart guard, who, ever since his entry into the city, has stood at his post, therewith continually agitating and inciting everything that he imagined in his way to get out of it. A slight turn in the street is gained and passed, and now the beasts are scarcely manageable as they come in full view of the inn, around which are thronged a host of ostlers, expectant friends, and halting pedestrians, awaiting the punctual arrival, that the clanging horn, before it was sighted, intimated was at hand, of the most punctual of stages. Instantly the cry of 'Here she comes!' is caught up by the bystanders, and a general advance made to catch sight of the approaching conveyance; whereupon the ostlers sing out 'Stand back,' and the crowd open out on either side. With a free course on come the clattering beasts full tilt, the guard still blowing to warn off or arrest the progress of any advancing vehicle that might impede the final dash, that coachee, with a skill that would guide the wheels of his coach over a sixpence, is at last making. 'Look out for your heads!' shouts the guard, which every one on the top of the stage would instinctively do without such warning, and bowing, as though in acknowledgment of the driver's skill, they

pass under the low archway into the yard, where the conscious steeds halt of themselves, and proclaim their own sense of their achievement by their snorting and pawing, whilst Jehu unbuckles the reins and throws them down on their backs, having previously tossed his whip to one of the stablemen. Casting aside his wrappers as quickly as his partially cramped limbs will permit, he descends from his box and disappears, in strange forgetfulness even of his whilom youthful friend, in haste to share the pot of half-and-half awaiting him at the bar, this time, however, to be shared by older and more permanent acquaintances than those of the last two or three days, whilst the more interested guard only delayed to join him until he had been 'tipped' the usual fee for presumed attentions not included in the fare.

'What's your name, young fellow?' said a dark, muscular man, as he approached and confronted Frendzburgh, who was just beginning to feel perplexed at his situation.

'Trelawney,' replied the youth, looking searchingly at his questioner.

'Are you from school? Where's your baggage?'

'In the boot,' replied Trelawney, who had become familiar with the nomenclature of the road in reference to equipages and the like during his long drive.

'Here ye are,' said one of the men, who was diving into and drawing out sundry packages from the place just designated, and handing them down to their several claimants. 'Fred somethin' Trelongway.'

'That's mine,' said Frendzburgh.

'Your name Treelong? take hold, bear a hand. Mr. Samuel Snipes,' exclaimed the ready reader of names, as he spelt the direction on another package with about the same success as the last.

'This yours?' said the party by whom the youth was just addressed, as he read the direction, then called a porter and told him to shoulder that, and thereupon took another survey of Frendzburgh, at the conclusion of which he said, 'Come on,' and flapped his sides as though satisfied at the state of matters, by which action we recognise an old friend.

They had walked side by side nearly half the length of the street without any further intercourse, when it occurred to Frendzburgh that it would not be out of place to ascertain who his friend might be, and so he asked, 'Do you belong to Dr. Scarr?'

'In some sort,' returned the other.

'Did he send you to meet me?'

'*Send* me?'

'Yes; did he tell you I'd be here?'

'I wouldn't have dreamt it!'

There was a cessation for a short distance, and then Frendzburgh thought he would try him again. 'What's your name, sir?' The addition of the last word was well timed.

'You'll soon know it; however, I've no objection to your knowing it now,—Grumphy,' said the concise man.

'Mr. Grumphy! I've heard that name somewhere.'

'Don't think it, young man. Never heard of any one of that name besides myself.'

'Oh, I'm sure I have!'

'You shouldn't be so cocksure of things when you're told not.'

Frendzburgh looked sideways at the cross-grained man, half inclined to retort, as he would have done very readily under other circumstances, but after a further pause, in which he endeavoured to recall his acquaintance with the name, it occurred to him, and he exclaimed, 'O yes, I know now!—weren't you a friend of little Wilton's?'

'What!' exclaimed the assistant, abruptly halting and looking round at Trelawney, who had been trying to keep up with him, and by which action the porter, whose head, weighted by the trunk on his knot, was slightly bent, had nearly run foul of him. 'Look out, can't ye?—where are ye running to?' snarled the assistant, as he pushed him back with such force that he had nearly upset him. Whereupon the porter dumped his load on the pavement, and sat grumbling thereon, whilst he wiped his forehead with the piece of dirty rag in the crown of his hat.

'Did you say, young man, you knew Willie—Willie Wilton?'

Frendzburgh smiled and nodded in response.

'Was he at the same school you came from?'

Frendzburgh nodded again.

Mr. Grumphy looked at Trelawney as though incredulous, and repeated his question; then added, 'And you've heard him speak of me? Poor little fellow!—only think of that. What did he say about me?—and any one else?'

'Yes, he talked of an aunt and some young girl that lived in the same house.'

'Did he, now?—bless his little heart!' A smile overspread his countenance, and he flapped his sides with great energy. 'And he never forgot me?'

'That's just the place where they don't forget a friend.'

'Don't they?—don't forget friends?'

'No; they think of them, talk of them, and dream of them.'

'How's that?'

'Because they're the last friends they've had, and small chance of many of 'em ever having another.'

'Poor Willie! Come on, porter,' said Mr. Grumphy, resolving into his crude state; and he started off at a rapid pace, as though hurrying away from his rising emotions, but in which effort he was being well-nigh worsted.

'Take care, boy!' exclaimed a man, against whom Trelawney came butt as he hastened to keep up with his guide, a proceeding that during the rest of the way was more than once repeated, as he endeavoured to worm his way through the crowded streets, fearful of losing sight of the assistant, who was too absorbed in his revived recollections to give a further thought respecting his charge.

Arrived at length at the shop, at the door of which they awaited the coming of the porter, whom they had outstripped, Mr. Grumphy demanded of Frendzburgh if he was acquainted with Dr. Scarr. Whereupon the other informed him that he knew nothing of him further than by report, and inquired what sort of a man he was, and if it was probable they'd like one another.

'Very,' responded the assistant. 'You'll become amazingly attached. Take the trunk into the passage there,' said he to the porter, as he opened the door to that individual, and directed the boy who had been tending the shop in his absence to show him the way and assist him. After settling with the man, he bade Frendzburgh follow him, and, passing through the passage, they ascended the stairs and knocked at the parlour door, where, the surgeon being absent, he introduced him to his amiable lady and left him.

In reference to the interview that ensued, both with Mrs. Scarr and subsequently with the surgeon, as well as their further intimacy, it may be noted that there were mutual disappointments. On the lady's part it was of an agreeable nature,—at first sight she became prepossessed: his open manly bearing, without being forward, accompanied by a natural politeness of manner, commended him at once to her regard. That he was deficient in polish, and exhibited a brusqueness, the result of his rough training, was plain, but a little intercourse with those into whose society his altered circumstances would throw him, would soon

effect a change in this respect. But these were no drawbacks in Mrs. Scarr's estimation, whose not very refined ideas led her to rather appreciate such style of behaviour, and rendered him in her eyes more attractive, her own views of propriety being more in accord therewith; consequently he was at once installed as a favourite with Mrs. Scarr. It was otherwise, however, with her husband, who was quite unprepared for and disappointed at discovering in his future pupil such an amount of intelligence and quickness of apprehension, qualities that were very undesirable, all things considered, and that would require a greater degree of shrewdness or wisdom on his part to obviate any ulterior result inimical to his plans. He had pictured to himself a dull, thick-skulled lad, as all boys sent to such places as he had been at ought to become, and it had never entered into his calculation that it was possible to be otherwise. With these views, he half regretted that he had fallen into an arrangement that might embarrass him, but the counter consideration that he would be under his immediate surveillance, and the still more potent pecuniary one, in some measure reconciled him thereto. However, he resolved to discourage all familiarity, and deport himself with great frigidity toward his young student, who thereupon came very readily to comprehend the irony of Mr. Grumphy's assertion, as to the amazing extent of his attachment for his principal as likely to result from a better acquaintance.

Happily Mrs. Scarr's prepossession was an effective shield against any domestic exhibition of the surgeon's dislike, the display whereof he was consequently compelled to reserve for other opportunities, of which he was not chary in taking advantage. But the worthy lady's obtrusive attentions soon became as irksome and repugnant to the object thereof as the manifestations of the surgeon's spleen. Proud of the 'young student,' by which appellation he was generally denominated, as reflecting greater credit upon the establishment, she lost no opportunity in assisting to set off his appearance, much to the chagrin of her husband and the annoyance of her *protegé*, the latter of whom would gladly have dispensed with her officiousness, continually displayed in her matronly essays at arranging the tie of his neckerchief or the set of his collar, and in insisting upon brushing back his hair to show his handsome high forehead. Before the expiration of a week, she had him clothed in a becoming suit, and, notwithstanding his reluctance to under-

go all these attentions, it must be admitted his appearance was much improved thereby.

It had, however, one very undesirable effect, which very early began to develope itself. At the commencement of his induction into the mysteries of his future calling, Mr. Grumphy had so far imposed a restraint on his habitual uncouthness as to occasionally show some interest in his associate, partly, no doubt, on Willie's account, as a further revelation had made known Frendzburgh's interest in the boy, as well as informed him of the lad's frequent references to himself. But it was not long before Frendzburgh became sensible of an alteration in the assistant's conduct, first by disparaging remarks in reference to his altered appearance, and then by overt acts, at times galling to his pride. It was evident Mr. Grumphy was jealous. Had his self-esteem been less, he might have spared himself such unnecessary exhibition of temper, since Mrs. Scarr's small attentions, prior to the advent of the student, were merely in default of any other person on whom to bestow her excess of affection, and not from any peculiar fondness; on the contrary, she had tolerated him because there was no one else to tolerate. But possibly, in addition to the feeling thus engendered, he too was susceptible of the baleful influence of pride, which was wounded by the contrast with his ungainly person, that appeared to much greater disadvantage by the side of his renovated junior. And as he affected a disregard, and even contempt, for outward adornments, exemplified in his own person, he was proportionately offended. As a consequence, he lost no opportunity in testifying his disapprobation of Frendzburgh's altered style, and did not hesitate to express an opinion that he looked much more like a sensible young man when he first arrived in his coarse, ill-made clothing, than he did in his dandified rig, which he declared only fit to be worn by a jackanapes, whatever that might be. Of course, whilst Frendzburgh would have been happy to have been relieved of much of Mrs. Scarr's extra solicitude, he was not quite at one with Mr. Grumphy in this view of the case.

But not only in his personal appearance did Frendzburgh undergo an improving change; there was an equally perceptible one taking place in the intellectual. To him the attainment of knowledge was a facile pleasure, only hitherto limited by the insurmountable obstacles of his position, but which, being now removed, he studiously availed himself of every opportunity of increasing, and, much earlier than would have been practicable

to one of ordinary abilities, became familiar with Latin and other studies having a bearing on his profession. During the lecture season his attendance was marked by rapid progress both in medicine and surgery, ordinary and clinical, as well as chemistry and the cognate branches, subsequently matured whilst walking the hospitals and on his matriculating at the London University, at that time recently established, but rapidly growing in favour.

Although Frendzburgh was careful to comport himself kindly and considerately towards Grumphy, his repellent, ungracious disposition rendered it exceedingly difficult at times so to do, and his moroseness presented an insuperable difficulty to any closer intercourse. This estrangement was no doubt increased by the consciousness of a difference in their social position, there being a material distinction in the status of a salaried druggist's assistant and an articled pupil looking prospectively to his diploma as a surgeon. Added to all this was a jealousy lest Frendzburgh should obtain any influence with the surgeon, who, despite his strong prejudices, was too sensible of his abilities and usefulness not to avail himself of his services in such cases as permitted, thereby relieving himself from overwork. The prepossessing manners of the promising student were generally a ready passport to the surgeon's patients.

Of course the above was the work of time, and as here referred to is rather anticipatory, and in order to avoid the necessity of recurring to anything so descriptive of his professional progress in future pages.

Prior, however, to this, and almost from the commencement, he was in the habit of accompanying the surgeon in his visits, and in minor cases attending him to the sick-room, where his quick apprehension rendered him conversant with some of the more prominent phases of disease, and useful to the surgeon in the preparation of sundry surgical appliances during operations requiring such aid. It was on such an occasion, that, being pressed for time, he was left by the surgeon at the door of the Herberts', whither he had previously attended him on his being called in to see Mary Jones, who had been confined to her bed by a prevailing epidemic. As this was the first time he had visited the little patient alone, it was the occasion of his being brought into more direct personal contact with the members of the family, whose interest in the young girl made them anxious to learn how she was progressing. On his descent, therefore, from the invalid's chamber, he was invited into the parlour, where, in response to

their inquiries, he assured them that all that was now required was the continuance of the same good nursing she had been receiving, and she would be convalescent in a few days. Short as was the interview, his self-possession and unassuming grace of manner completely charmed Mrs. Herbert and her daughters, who during the remainder of the day made the handsome, polite young student the subject of conversation, contrasting his frank easy deportment with the habitual reserve and severity of the stern surgeon.

One or two subsequent visits tended to confirm the first impressions and add to their strength, especially as, on the conversation taking a more general turn, the younger ladies discovered, in his unartificial mode of conveying his views and ideas, an amount of intelligence rare in one so young. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that, on his further attendance becoming unnecessary by the recovery of Mary, they should become sensible that they missed one who had unwittingly ingratiated himself into their esteem, and almost regretted that any further necessity for such attendance had ceased; and although Miss Harriet's pleasantries were now less frequent, she could not refrain from laughingly suggesting to the little waiting-maid her fears that she was still unwell, had a relapse, and that consequently it would be well to call in Dr. Scarr to see her again; but which called forth loud protestations from the lass that 'she was sure she did not feel a bit sick, there wasn't a ha'porth a matter with her, and that she was not going to take another spoonful of that gruff old thing's nasty stuff;' nor was the inducement sufficiently strong even when Miss Harriet further suggested, and which, of course, was the ostensible reason for suggesting the relapse, the probability that this time the more agreeable young surgeon would prescribe something more palatable, and himself attend her altogether. Not that Mary was insensible to the same qualifications that had operated so magically upon the ladies; on the contrary, she was still further moved by an incentive that of itself would have been sufficiently potent. Won by his kindliness and solicitude for her recovery, in her artlessness she had ventured to speak to him of what just then was uppermost in her mind. Miss Austen had, not more than half-an-hour previous to his arrival, left her bedside, at which, according to her wont, she had talked to her of Jesus and prayed with her. The serious impressions thereby made were still resting on her mind when Frendsburgh entered her room, and, encouraged by his

sympathizing words, she began to talk to him about dear Aunt Fanny, and to tell him why she called her Aunt, because dear little Willie always called her so. Frendzburgh's curiosity was naturally awakened, and he was no less surprised than pleased to learn that he had so fortuitously happened upon another of Willie's early friends, and which, as it had increased his interest in his young patient, of course immediately won her loving heart, when, with unbounded delight, she learned that he too was acquainted with one so dear to her, and she longed for an opportunity to converse with him again on a subject of which she never tired, but which on that occasion he forbade her dwelling on, lest it should excite her, and thereby retard her restoration.

On this account, therefore, Mary was additionally desirous of a continuance of the visits of the youthful Æsculapius, though not disposed to hold out the same pretext for their renewal.

After one or two more jocular efforts to overcome Mary's scruples on this point, she archly retorted by hinting 'how nice it would be if Miss Harriet only got ill herself, not anything bad like, but just a little bit, so as Mr. Trelawney could come and see her.'

Whilst thus in childish sport turning the tables on her young mistress, had she been a little older, and consequently a little wiser,—and it is astonishing how soon young ladies do become wise in such matters, more remarkable from the converse dullness in the opposite sex of their own and even a riper age,—she might have detected in that smile at her little attempt at retaliation, a certain incipient or premonitory symptom of a complaint that, unless met and early checked, threatened to become of a more serious nature than proposed by Mary, even penetrating within the pericardium, where it would indeed challenge the therapeutic skill of all save the subject of their discourse, who in that case would alone be able to effect a cure by himself becoming similarly affected.

In effect, though Miss Harriet would have indignantly repudiated any such insinuation, her more experienced sister divined that the young surgeon was unconsciously winning his way to her heart, and of which she was daily more convinced, as she lost no opportunity of contrasting the young surgeon's manner with that of her pertinacious lover, Mr. Zenas Hawkes, much to the disadvantage of the latter.

Although, perhaps, for reasons above surmised, Frendzburgh was even less aware of his own feelings than Miss Harriet, he was quite sensible of the fact that he experienced more than a

passing regret that no further excuse for his visits to Bedford Square existed.

The conversation with Mary recalled, with some upbraidings of conscience, his neglect of Willie, to whom, on his return to Catherine Street, he immediately addressed a letter enclosed in one to Nanny Miller. It should, however, be stated that on his first arrival he had spoken of him to the surgeon, but, having been reprimanded for so doing, had not again recurred to the subject.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SKEGGS DISMISSED.

'"PROVIDED always, and it is hereby stipulated, covenanted, and agreed that in case the said trustees, or the survivor of them, or—or,"—what the dickens is that word?' said Mr. Skeggs, who was seated at his desk, endeavouring to decipher the mangled production of Mr. Hawkes, termed in legal parlance a draft, the fair copy of which, when he had completed it, was to be submitted to counsel before engrossing. Mr. Skeggs took up the paper and went to the window, and made a fresh attempt to make out the hieroglyphics, through which a pen had been drawn the whole length of the line with the intention of obliterating it, but which, on reconsideration, it had been found proper to restore, and to effect which the word 'stet' was written in the margin. Mr. Skeggs looked up to the top of the window to ascertain if there was a possibility of obtaining more light; then, quite satisfied of the hopelessness of any assistance in that direction, he returned to his desk and threw the paper thereon and resumed his seat. 'It's enough to puzzle a fellow at the Adelphi, it is.' He paused to reconsider the words he had just uttered. 'I wonder why they say that? I don't see why it would be harder to puzzle a fellow there than in Barge Yard;' he thought a little while, and then gave it up. Mr. Skeggs had rather bungled the saying, it having reference, in its correct form, to the presumed superior acuteness of a Philadelphia lawyer.

He took up his pen and dipped it in the ink, and the next instant was nervously applying his tongue to mop up a large blot that had fallen from the overloaded quill on the fair copy, and which had the effect of spreading a watery dark stain over several words. Mr. Skeggs looked chagrined, and then gave another lick, but, on further inspection, did not consider he had improved it. Deciding to wait until it dried, he rose and began a survey.

of the office, probably enjoying its orderly arrangement, at the conclusion whereof he noiselessly turned the handle of the door of the inner room, and, treading softly, entered it. Although quite aware that it was empty, he looked cautiously round, as though to convince himself thereof, more than once returning to the door to listen lest any one should be ascending the stairs. At length he approached the table and took a hurried glance at the papers scattered thereon, in doing which he trod on a note that had fallen to the ground, and stooped and picked it up, and carelessly read the first line or two; but as it proved to be from Captain Lejette, remonstrating with the attorney at his long detention in confinement,—but which Octavius knew arose from the difficulty in finding any one willing to bail him,—without reading further he was in the act of refolding and laying it on the table, when his eye accidentally fell on a word that caused him to look again, and he read in a postcript, 'Glad to learn your intention with regard to old Fizzy, or Figgy, or whatever you call him. Don't lose a moment,—fix his flint; but, *ad interim*, get me out of this.' Mr. Skeggs was at a loss to take in the full meaning of this on the first reading, and thereupon carefully read it over until he understood it to apply to Mr. Figgins, when he commenced repeating to himself, 'Fix Figgy's flint,' the odd alliteration inducing him to continue the repetition several times, until, at the conclusion thereof, he stopped and commenced an argument. 'Fix Figgins' flint,—how'll he do that? and what's *he* to do with Figgins' flint? what good will that do him, I'd like to know?' Just then he fancied he heard a footstep, and, throwing down the note, retreated into his own room and resumed his seat and pen; but as no one made his appearance, he returned to his musings on the significant words, whose meaning he was again endeavouring to fathom, but without success, when his thoughts recurred to the manuscript before him, and he exclaimed, 'By jingo! I must get on.' Whereupon, leaving a blank for the illegible line, to be filled up after a reference to the attorney, he set to work with some speed to make up for lost time, until, brought to a stop by a fresh caligraphic difficulty, he fell into a fresh train of thought, during which he mechanically traced some characters on his pad, it may be by their similitude to suggest the nature of those at which he hesitated, although they bore a stronger resemblance to the phonetic writing of some ancient Egyptian, or, more probably, to the Arabic, which latter would account for his suddenly striking out with the first two

lines of a 'Farewell to Araby's daughter,' which he continued to repeat in a melancholy strain until Araby and Arabella became interchangeable words, and evoked a sigh, which appeared somewhat to relieve him, for he recommenced his copying until his thoughts strayed off, and he discovered he had substituted 'the said Figgins' for 'the aforesaid Frendzburgh.' A smear of the finger being too late, the ink having dried, he made a vigorous assault thereon with his penknife, and so effectually succeeded in removing the wrong words that the paper disappeared with them, leaving two or three holes to indicate the place they had occupied. 'There's a go!' said the dismayed Skeggs, as soon as he discovered his mishap, and sat contemplating it with a rueful countenance; 'ain't that provoking? What's a matter with the paper this morning?' Thereupon he tore the sheet into fragments, and threw it on the floor. 'Well, here goes *de novo.*' Octavius perfectly understood the meaning of that term now.

To make up his deficient morning's work, which was likely to draw forth some strictures from the attorney, he now set to work with such alacrity, that he got through two sheets before he stopped, whereat he was so satisfied that he opened his desk and took a bite at his lunch, and then went for the third sheet, at the second line on which he was writing the words, 'and the said Frendzburgh Trelawney,' when he stopped, and muttered to himself, 'Trelawney! Who's Trelawney? That's queer now, that's what Grumphy wanted to know. Why, that can't be the same as I thought; *he* can't be dead,—that is, the aforesaid Trelawney.' Thereupon he looked back and commenced re-reading what he had been so mechanically writing. 'Why, that's a young Trelawney, a chip of the old block.' Mr. Skeggs found he had made a discovery, the ruminations upon which, whilst they further interfered with his progress in the copying, began to throw light upon a hitherto perplexing subject, but which he was prevented working out to a solution by the desire just then for another bite at his lunch, and which was not arrested until the half had disappeared, when, replacing the remnant in its depository, he took up his pen to resume, exclaiming as he did so, 'Fix Figgins' flint,' and which he had very nearly committed to his paper, but luckily came to himself before he had got farther than the first word; at least it would have been lucky had not Mr. Skeggs fallen into the bad habit of occasionally using the soft part of his hand for a blotter, and in so employing it on this occasion, he was not aware that a piece of butter from

his lunch had adhered thereto, consequently the little word 'Fix' became a fixture, quite transparent on the soiled paper. Mr. Skeggs looked at the paper in astonishment, and then examined his hand; after which he caught up the former and tore it in half, with an expression or two of disgust, demanding at the same time, in language quite reprehensible for one privileged with such moral teaching, 'what the d—l was a matter with it this morning?' and thereupon, as being the fittest place for anything having relation to the party alluded to, he strode over to the smouldering fire, and, committing it thereto, watched it strans-formation into a thin, crisp cinder, ending in a sudden flight up the chimney. Mr. Skeggs stirred the fire, and turned his back thereto, and, withdrawing the skirts of his coat from their pendent and proper position, stood with them under his arms, his person intercepting the feeble rays that had been vainly encouraged to disperse their heat throughout the room.

The document which had so tried Mr. Hawkes' clerk in making a fair copy thereof, when finally approved, was intended to be engrossed on a sheet of parchment, and substituted for the middle one of the original deed of trust relating to the Trelawney estate, which would thus render only a very slight and almost imperceptible alteration necessary on the first sheet, the last, having little more than the *testatum* clause, with the original signatures, would require no 'doctoring,' and the alterations referred to in the attestation of the witnesses being made to agree in the new sheet, the necessity for Mr. Figgins' complicity was obviated. It was apparent, from this and his previous blunders, that it was the unhappy faculty of the attorney to regard so closely and concentratedly the one object proposed as to deprive him of the ability to extend his vision and take in all its possible bearings, or to discover a better mode, until forced on him by the necessity of extricating himself from the one adopted, which in this case had all along evidenced a lack of shrewdness. Unfortunately for Mr. Hawkes, this course did not suggest itself until after the failure of the effort to tamper with Mr. Figgins, and which had been so determinately resisted as to cause some degree of alarm to himself and clients; for although the attorney, as seen, had proceeded with due caution and mystification, and set off the transaction in a very plausible, sanctimonious way, he was sensible, on after consideration, that he had, by his estimate of his client's character, whose ignorance or simplicity he had considered would render him the plaything of his astuter mind,

placed himself in a wrong position. Those very defects which he had counted on as affording him the advantage, had necessitated a greater exposure of the case than would have been desirable to a wiser head, in order to a comprehension of what was required of him, and, on reaching the point at which light broke in on Mr. Figgins' obtuse mind, it had become irradiated to an undesirable extent. And further, though somewhat confused in his ideas, the attorney became aware that he was better acquainted with the purport of the document in question than witnesses usually are, having, as an old and tried servant of the elder Trelawney, frequently heard him speak of his intended mode of disposal of his property in case of accident, and which he understood to have been the purport of the deed to which he was called on to append his name. Consequently, should he by chance come in contact with the interested party,—not at all improbable, since aware that he had been placed at school,—he might institute inquiries, additionally instigated thereto by his irritation at the failure of his cause; being in possession of so much of the trustees' design as he could understand, he might not only prove a serious obstacle to the success of their schemes, but endanger their own safety.

Under these circumstances, after a long conference, it was decided to forestall any such possible interference by prompt action against Figgins; the surgeon at the same time being cautioned to exercise increased watchfulness over his pupil, whose proximity all concurred in pronouncing unpropitious. Thereupon the attorney, impressed with the danger of hesitancy, proceeded at once to carry out the resolve, despite the small anxiety experienced in his endeavour to arrange the matter with conscience, which still, though not as potently as in former days, struck the moral chord, for, 'while she seemed to sleep,' she refused quite to close her watchful eye, and whispered what she thought, though feebly, 'in the pale delinquent's private ear.'

Mr. Skeggs had just concluded his meditations, and gone through another attempt at 'Araby's daughter,' with a like failure in getting beyond the first stanza, when his well-accustomed ear informed him that the governor had placed his foot on the first tread of the stairs, and, as a consequence, on that important personage entering the office, he found his clerk, as usual, so absorbed in the copying, that it was not until the former had looked over his shoulder that he became aware of his presence, but which he was made sensible of by the demand, in a peevish

tone, 'if that was all he had done this morning?' Mr. Skeggs, by way of extenuation, intimated that it was very hard to make out. This the attorney demurred to; whereupon Octavius pointed out the words left blank, which the attorney declared were very plain, but, after an ineffectual essay to translate the illegible words, informed Mr. Skeggs he would fill them in himself after he had finished, which, if he went on at that rate, he thought would be a month hence, in which opinion Mr. Skeggs coincided, though of course he did not say so; on the contrary, bringing the left side of his face on a plane with the desk, he commenced scribbling at as rapid a rate as his impeded reading of the original and the continued expostulations of the attorney at his tardiness permitted. At the conclusion of the sheet, the latter retired to his own room, much to the relief of his clerk, whose nerves were becoming agitated by this supervision, and who, therefore, as the door closed, threw down his pen, thereby impressing the copy with an extra mark, strode back to the fire, and resumed his former attitude, though not his musings, which now went in the direction of imagining Mr. Hawkes' cranium under his arm, whilst he was gratifying himself by punching thereat, an occupation he expressed a desire to be employed at for the next five minutes; but before that length of time had expired, Mr. Skeggs was standing very meekly by the attorney's side, in anything but a pugilistic position, undergoing the continuation of the late essay, wound up by a few select aphorisms on the value of time, which should be seized by the forelock, in which Mr. Skeggs once more felt he could coincide, provided Mr. Hawkes impersonated that ancient worthy, and he was privileged to perform the operation. At the conclusion of these valuable maxims, he directed Mr. Skeggs to enter a memorandum, which he handed him, in the day-book, having reference to an attendance that morning on Captain Lejette at his temporary residence in Serles Place, consulting on matters relative to his incarceration, but which was to be posted and charged to the Trelawney estate, subject to slight alteration in the wording thereof.

'Mr. Skeggs,' exclaimed the attorney, as the former was making for the door, under the impression that the latter had completed his orders, 'you seem terribly anxious to get out of my way.' Mr. Skeggs was again in accord with his principal, whose sagacity in thus divining his thoughts he considered quite remarkable. 'There, read that—don't blot it,' which he

would have done but for the timely exclamation of the attorney, as he handed him a slip of paper that he had just written on. Octavius read it over more than once, in evident perplexity, almost approaching dismay, at the conclusion repeating slowly to himself, 'Fix Figgins' flint.'

'Eh! where? show it me,—where does it say that?'

'Say what, sir?'

'What you read.'

'What I read?' said the clerk, rather confused.

'Yes; where does it say "fix his flint"?'

'Oh, nowhere—I was only saying that.'

'Oh, ah! Yes, you're right, Skeggs; you're right, quite right, and so we will, it's quite time. I am pleased at your discernment; was hardly prepared for it. See you'll make a first-rate common law clerk yet, after a little more drilling. Glad to find you so agree with my own views, very glad.' So unusual a commendation of his views quite astonished Octavius, as much so as what he had just read, and was doubtless occasioned by Mr. Hawkes experiencing a sense of relief in obtaining this voluntary approval of a course that, despite his efforts to the contrary, had rather troubled him, and which was the more assuring, as it came not only from a disinterested party, but from one ordinarily, as he conceived, too obtuse to see so clearly into a case, as to thus, unsolicited, concur in the propriety of the course that the slip of paper in his hands indicated was about to be pursued; which was nothing more nor less than the issue of a writ, whereby Mr. Figgins was to be placed in a similar position to the Captain. The perusal of the slip had brought to Skeggs' mind and revealed the meaning of the postcript to that gentleman's note, and caused his involuntary exclamation.

'When is it to be issued?' said Mr. Skeggs, only partially recovering from his astonishment.

'To-morrow.'

'And does he know of your intention?'

'You'll have to accompany the sheriff's officer to-morrow, to point him out.'

'Me, sir!' exclaimed Skeggs, stepping back and looking at the attorney with an embarrassed air.

'Yes; it won't take you long.'

'I won't finish that copying if I do.'

'O dear, you can do that to-night, before you go.'

'To-night,—copy all that to-night! No, I can't, sir,' replied

Skeggs, who, recovering from his surprise, began to realize the unpleasantness as well as harshness of the proceeding. Not that the latter was at all unusual, or would have occasioned any disturbance to Octavius in ordinary cases, but for the first time in the course of his legal calling he was personally interested, and that occasioned the awakening of feelings of a painful nature.

'Can't!' responded the attorney, astounded at this unprecedented opposition; 'you can't do what I order you?'

'No, sir!'

'You mean to say you won't?'

'No, sir, I don't mean that.'

'Then what do you mean?'

'I can't have anything to do with this, sir;' and he laid on the table the 'precept,' as the slip of paper the attorney had handed him was called.

'Can't have anything to do with this, and only a minute ago you urged me to do it!'

'Me!' exclaimed Skeggs,—'me tell you to do so! When did I say so?'

'Did you not tell me to fix him?'

'Never!'

'Mr. Skeggs,' said the angry lawyer, knitting his brows and looking savagely at his clerk, 'dare you stand there and contradict me, when I heard you say it with my own ears?'

'Say what, sir?'

'Fix him, or words to that effect.'

'Never, sir. I'll take my affidavit.'

The lawyer looked amazed at the audacity of his clerk, half rose in his seat, then threw himself back and looked up at the ceiling and sighed. Presently turning towards Skeggs, who was going through an unenviable mental process, he took up his military client's letter, that lay before him, and, waving it slowly up and down, said in a sarcastic tone, 'Mr. Skeggs, am I an idiot? Did I dream it, or imagine it? or where did I get the idea? Where, I ask you, where, sir, did I get that idea?' He struck the table with the letter, and, throwing it thereon, looked fiercely at his embarrassed clerk, who, thus challenged, unable to control himself, exclaimed, pointing to the document,

'There, sir, in that letter.'

'What's the man mean?' said the lawyer, taking up the note and turning it over, and then running his eye through the

contents until he came to the obnoxious words, during which Mr. Skeggs was becoming sensible of the awkward 'fix' in which he had placed himself.

'Oh! oh! I see! that's how you employ yourself in my absence,—that's how the office duties are neglected, and the copying not half finished!—I see, I see it all! umph! Mr. Skeggs, you and I'— he paused. 'But before I come to this,'— the attorney assumed an affected calmness,—'you see how impossible it is to escape detection when doing wrong; taken off your guard by my tact, you have betrayed yourself, and stand there self-condemned. No further confidence can be placed in you. However, I'll talk more on this by and by; in the meantime,'—taking up the precept and handing it again to Skeggs,— 'you'll issue that writ, and be prepared to accompany the officer to-morrow.'

'Sir,' remonstrated Octavius in a pleading tone, 'I can't do it; he's a friend, a particular friend of mine, and I'll go bail he don't run off. Don't be so hard on him; it's not right—he's victimized—he's'—

Mr. Hawkes could listen no further. 'A friend of yours, Mr. Skeggs?' He nodded. 'A particular friend of yours?' Skeggs nodded again.

'Oh, then, that settles it!' returned the lawyer, throwing the paper on the table and himself back in his chair, and looking upwards, 'that settles it;' and he went on repeating the words several times to himself, realizing, as he did so, that he was encountering an unexpected and serious difficulty, and that in a quarter he had least anticipated. Unwittingly he had been putting himself in the power of one who might frustrate all, if nothing worse ensued. True, of their present purpose he could scarcely be cognisant, as their consultations had been secret, and, except the draft that he was copying, of the design of which he could not yet be aware, nothing had transpired, as he flattered himself, that could do more than awaken, it might be, some vague suspicion. All this and more flashed through the attorney's mind, and whilst it alarmed, partially consoled him under the circumstances; but he saw no time was to be lost in ridding himself of the vexatious cause of this new anxiety. So, raising himself in his chair, he continued, 'That settles it. Mr. Skeggs, you and I must part. You refuse to obey my orders,—there's no alternative.' Withdrawing his purse from his pocket, he counted out the moiety of his weekly pittance due to that date, and

informed him that his services would not be required after that evening. As Mr. Skeggs took up the few shillings, his heart beat strongly, but he was silent.

'I hope, Mr. Skeggs,' said the attorney blandly, and with a sigh, 'you'll do well, much better than you've done with me; that you'll get a kinder, more indulgent master,—one who'll be more considerate, more solicitous for your temporal and spiritual welfare. I know I'm but a poor, sinful worm, liable to err, too apt to be carried away by a strong and affectionate interest in those I have to do with. I had hoped, Mr. Skeggs,—but never mind, it's over. It is ever thus with all human expectations,—there's nothing true but heaven.' Mr. Hawkes sighed. Moved by the plaintive tone and apparent concern for his future welfare, as well as the rising considerations connected with the consequences resulting from the loss of his situation, Mr. Skeggs sighed too. 'That will do, Mr. Skeggs; you can retire,' added the attorney.

A few seconds after this affecting scene, Octavius might have been seen sitting on his stool, his head buried in his hands, leaning on his desk, every now and again giving a spasmodic kick with his heels on the legs of the stool. At length he rose up, his eyes wandered over his desk, and he took up the ruler and held it towards the window, then cocked his eye at one end thereof, and discovered it was as crooked as Winkles' legs. 'No wonder he could never rule a straight line with it,—he'd have to get a new one; and then his pens were miserable,—he liked bank quills best, and would borrow one or two at the law stationer's in the Bury to-morrow.' A cough in the next room recalled him to himself. 'To-morrow! why, I shan't be here to-morrow.' He walked away from his desk and looked around the room, noting, as he did so, the old familiar articles therein; approached the press, opened the door and closed it again, and returned to his stool, at which he gazed a few seconds, then placed his hands under his coat tail, and, addressing it pathetically, said, 'Going to leave you, old fellow. This form that has pressed your old leather top will soon press it no more. Another will repose his tired frame upon your well-worn seat. Farewell, old desk! no more lunches concealed in your furthest corners. And you, dear old penwiper,'—the said penwiper had originally consisted of different coloured cloths, but from long usage had become so stained and crusted with ink that it was black and hard,—'must I leave you behind? And you, old knife, thou hast seen better days;

I remember thee when thou camest first from the cutler's. How many a pen hast thou mended! how many a word erased! how many a lunch of bread and meat or cheese hast thou helped to cut into smaller pieces! but now thou art no longer thy former self.' This was quite true, for Mr. Skeggs had broken the blade in half one day whilst aiming at a mark on the opposite wall. 'Alas and alack!' He stopped; it was getting too much for him, and he walked over to the window. 'Hallo! I wonder what's up, there's Winkles a-talking with'— he rubbed some of the dirt off one of the panes—'oh, it's Brown's little clerk! I wonder if he knows I'm leaving. Fix Figgins' flint!—heigh-ho!' He returned to his desk and looked over it again. 'I think I'll quit the law,—too much hocussing for me;' thereupon he sat down on the stool, and, throwing it back on its hind legs, leaned against the wall and continued his reflections.

During this monologue in the outer office, another, though less demonstrative, had been going on in the inner one. Mr. Hawkes, too, was reviewing the situation. To think, just as he had arrived at a decision, seen his way clear, and was shaping matters to a favourable issue, a new barrier interposed. It really was too bad, and seemed as if the fates were against him,—and from so contemptible a source, too. Was he, for such an one, to be compelled to change his tactics again, and in further consultations expose himself afresh to the taunts and loss of confidence of disappointed and impatient clients? 'Figgins his friend, and I not know it before! and, but for a providential interference, might have been entrapped by this hypocritical agent of Satan before I knew it! But ah! that's it,—Providence —a watchful Providence!' He threw himself back in his chair, and directed his eyes to the mysterious spot, and the cheering thought that had thus passed through his mind, caused a smile to pass over his features. 'No, no,' something seemed to whisper, —probably the subtle spirit that dwelt in the corner above, and that he so continually consulted,—'no, no, Hawkes, you were not such a fool; you were not permitted to be betrayed or thrown off your guard,—an especial Providence has interposed, and hedged you around. Certainly the steps of a good man are ordered aright; just in the very nick comes the'— He stopped; he had stumbled on a term that suggested uncomfortable thoughts, and which now, turning in a fresh current, from indistinct outlines, at first blurred and indefinite, began to assume a spectral and fiendish aspect, and once or twice he started and opened

his eyes, that he had tightly closed to rid himself of the image that glared upon him with strange distinctness. He raised himself, wiped the cold dew from his brow, and endeavoured to pursue his thinkings without the assistance of his torturing oracle.

As he regained his composure in part, he could not hide from himself that he had not a complete monopoly of the knowledge of the questionable proceedings affecting this case. Little though it might be that his clerk knew, he knew too much; and which knowledge, should it come in contact with what he had found, in his last interview with Figgins, that individual also to be in possession of, it might prove very damaging to himself and clients. With these thoughts came others as little assuring. 'Might not his clerk, in some way unknown to him, have possessed himself of scraps of information that could be turned to account? witness the note before him, that had so providentially been the means of betraying the serpent he had been nestling in his bosom.' Mr. Hawkes' ire kindled afresh at this latter suggestion. Agitated by such considerations, at one time he had almost resolved to retain him in his service for the sole purpose of keeping him under his eye, but the impossibility of doing this without compromising himself still further, rendered this course impracticable; besides, it would be tempting Providence;—so Mr. Hawkes concluded to abide by his action and let him go. Borne along the stream, it was more than probable, like thousands of others, he would soon be carried beyond reach of or interest in the past, and there would be an end of it.

Arrived at this conclusion, he carefully collected the papers relating to the trust, secured them under lock and key, and put on his hat. As he passed through Mr. Skeggs' office, he took the rough draft off his desk and deposited it in his pocket, and, turning to him, proffered his hand and shook it heartily, repeating what he had before stated, 'the great interest he had taken in him, and should always continue to take; hoped he would do well, much better than with him,' and took his leave.

As soon as Mr. Hawkes' descending footstep was heard by Skeggs on the pavement below, he commenced collecting his few traps, as he termed the trifling accumulations belonging to himself that lay about the room, and tied them up in a bundle. Such articles as he deemed worthless he either left or threw into the fire, amongst the latter of which were a quantity of old pens, spoilt sheets of paper, parchment writs, and other rubbish

that had accumulated in his desk during his sojourn in the office; at the termination whereof he took up his parcel, locked the door, and deposited the key over the casing thereof. He seemed, however, in no hurry to descend, but took down the key, reopened the door, and looked into the tenantless room and sighed. Mr. Skeggs was weak in this particular; his heart warmed to old places and old friends, and even to old people. As a consequence, he could not contemplate his severance, even from a place where it might be presumed he had passed few pleasant days, unmoved. Day after day he had wended his way hither, until he had almost come to know every object along the whole route; had become specially familiar with the subordinates of the Yard, and even exchanged a nod with some of the principals. As for the room in which he had spent so great a portion of his time, he could scarcely conceive that he had no further right there; and as he relocked the door, he experienced a pang that had almost found expression at his eyes.

Rallying himself, he descended into the Yard, and, looking round for the old porter, bolted over to him, and slapped him on the shoulder with an energy that surprised that functionary; then grasped his hand, and gave it a hearty shake, that still more surprised him, that being quite a novel proceeding on the part of the lawyer's clerk.

'Going home, Mr. Skeggs?' said the rather disconcerted Winkles, unable to account for such an extra exhibition of regard.

'Known ye a long time now, Winkles.'

'Yes; a matter of—let me see,'—inserting his finger under his paper cap, to scratch up a remembrance,—'well, I don't 'zactly 'member; howsomdever, it's a good few years.'

'You've been a good fellow, Winkle; done me many a good turn.'

'Oh, as for that, I'm nothing to brag on.'

'Yes, you are; don't expect I'll find another like ye.'

'Oh, I'm no account; there be scores better. It 'ud be a mity bad world if there warn't,—though you might go furder and fare worser.'

'You've been here a long time too, Winkles.'

'That I 'ave, you may say that.' He had been so long a member of the Yard, that no one except the old housekeeper at the further end remembered his coming thereto.

'Nice quiet place this,—not annoyed with carts and horses.'

'Noyed! no, a man could take a dose'—he meant a doze—'on the doorstep, and not be 'sturbed;' as Winkles had often proved in slack times.

'S'pose you'll die here.'

'Eh? 'ope not.'

'Well, I don't mean that,—I mean, you'll do duty here till you die.'

'O yes, if the good Lord spare me till then.'

'Well, good-bye, Winkles,'—taking his large, coarse hand again in his, and endeavouring to make an impression thereon. 'You'll remember your old friend Skeggs, odd times?'

'Old! it's time to say old when you're as grey as me. But I say, look here, what's up, Mr. Skeggs?' seeing the parcel under his arm. 'Got a holiday? It's time ye had, it's the first sin' you been here.'

'I'm going for good, Winkles.'

'Eh! what! no! now you don't say that? You ben't goin' to leave the Yard for good an' all?' exclaimed the porter, grasping his hand tightly, and opening his eyes to their full.

'Yes, I am, Winkles. I won't forget you; if I can be of any use to you at any time, let me know.'

'Nonsense!' said the porter, holding him still by the hand, and endeavouring to look into his averted face, 'nonsense! you're gammoning now; want to take a rise out of me. None o' your larking.'

'No, 'pon honour, Winkles, it's true.'

'Got the sack?' Skeggs nodded. 'Well, if that don't bang all!' Winkles let go his hand and looked amazed.

'Say good-bye for me to all the fellows in the Yard;' saying which Skeggs hurried away, watched by the porter, who stood looking towards the end of the Yard as though he expected him to reappear.

'Well, he wur a decent chap. I'm mortal sorry.' Thereupon he set about imparting the information to such of the clerks, warehousemen, and others as he considered ought to feel as he did, always accompanying the intelligence with expressions of regret, and declaring 'he hadn't left his like in the Yard,—always ready to do a fellow a good turn; never know'd him do a wrong one 'cept that time as he pulled him off the old brewery window, an' nearly broke his leg, but he'd forgiven him that d'rectly after.'

CHAPTER L.

THE LETTER.

CLOGS had again to be replaced by boots and shoes at Grumbleby, the only indication in the article of clothing that spring had succeeded winter. As each school was in all essentials a duplicate of the other, there was no variation in this particular from the rest, a pleasing harmony of purpose and aim being apparent throughout, notwithstanding the very strong rivalry and disclaimers of connection or resemblance continually asserted by the principals when on their half-yearly visits to London. That the winter garb should not differ in texture or material from the summer, evidenced the soundness of the economic principles on which these seminaries were conducted. Not only were they thus enabled to effect a saving that admitted of the scholar being entered at a smaller charge, but, by thus bestowing no greater care at one season of the year than another, on the 'outer boy' as well as the inner, any neutralizing effect in the hardening process was avoided, an essential element in the permanent success and prosperity of these institutions. Experience had unmistakeably proved that only such pupils as were rendered impervious to heat or cold, hunger or pummelling, were able to undergo the salutary discipline pursued, or rather bear up whilst so undergoing it, the more tender, or coddled ones, as they were denominated, usually succumbing.

Owing, therefore, to the extra demand on Jurdy Langstaff's staple commodity for effecting repairs to the said boots and shoes, and in order to render many of them wearable prior to their issue, it became necessary to replenish his stock of leather, and for this purpose he had been to the tannery at the village, and, according to usage, called at the post office to ascertain if there were any letters for Grumbleby. After a slow search through the loose missives kept in a superannuated tea-chest,—the postmaster

being a general dealer in groceries, linens, hose, iron-ware, etc., —he was handed one for the schoolmaster, at the same time taking down another stuck between two jars on the shelf, he inquired, as he made an attempt to read the address, 'if he knew any person of the name of Mrs. Nehemiah, as well as he could make out, near Grumbleby Hall, Bowes, Yorkshire.'

'Wha'd ta say? I dunno t' name.'

'Mistress Nathaniel. No, stop, that's no' it,' said the postmaster, setting himself deliberately to spell out the name. 'N-a-n, that's Nan; n-y, Nanny. M—Miles, Nanny Miles, or something like it.'

'Why, aw'll bet a croan 'at's t' owd widda, Crowdy Nan, as our lods ca' her.'

'What's her right name?'

'Nanny Miller.'

'That's it; tell her here's a letter here waitin' for her these six weeks an' more.'

'Wall, aw'm capped. Sax weeks, an' t' owd woman nivver coom'd for 't. What mun aw say 't's aboot?'

'Tell her to coom an' get 't, and then she'll see.'

Jurdy promised to comply, and took up his leather sides, and left the shop; but as he did not return to the Hall until—as ordinarily on the occasion of a visit to the village—he had made a prolonged visit to the alehouse, it is presumed the latter circumstance drove the remembrance of his commission out of his leather head, until another week had elapsed, when he was reminded thereof by drawing out of his pocket a piece of paper wherewith to light his pipe, during the folding of which he suddenly recollected the letter committed to his charge by the postmaster for delivery to Mr. Kearas, and whereof the piece just doubled up was undoubtedly a remnant, the residue, no doubt, having served the same or some other useful purpose whilst Jurdy was under other than sober influence. Of course Mr. Langstaff halted, and though he lit his pipe with a wax end instead, he did not enjoy his smoke with that serenity that usually attended the act, but, as it afforded time for consideration as to the best course to be pursued under the circumstances, he came to the conclusion that it was wisest to at once make away with the aforesaid remnant, and thus rid himself of any chance of discovery, a decision that was of a piece with the morale of the establishment, and which he accordingly acted on; but as this brought to his remembrance the information he had promised to convey to

Mrs. Miller, he took an opportunity during the day to look in at the cottage and inform her that a letter awaited her call at the post office.

'A letter for mysen! whoiver is 't from, Jurdy?'

'Aw dunno, bud aw can guess,' replied Jurdy with a leer, as he sat down and commenced filling his pipe.

'Can tha, noo? Wha is 't?'

''At's noa Peggy Sootil, aw knaws 'at.'

'Isn't, lad? wha then?'

'An' et's noa Joonas,' continued Jurdy, as he stooped and took up an ember from the wood fire on the hearth and placed it on the bowl of his pipe, and commenced drawing and puffing thereat, the while putting Mrs. Miller's patience to the test, and who, wound up to the highest pitch by his tantalizing procedure, took a seat by his side, and, unable to brook further delay, exclaimed,

'Cudna' tha stap thi puffin' an' smookin', an' spaik? Wha's sendin' the writin'?'

Mr. Langstaff withdrew the interfering article from his lips, and ejected the contents of his mouth into the fireplace, and then, looking very gravely into Nanny's face, slowly repeated her words:

'Wha's sendin' the writin'? 'At's what aw's wantin' to knaw mysen.'

'An' canna tha tell,—an dunno tha knaw what's insoide?'

'Wall, tha see, Nanny, aw seed thur name on t' d'reckshun, an' aw read 't ovver and ovver agean, an' aw luked on top side, an' on unner side, an' dang 't ev aw cud make oot wha sent 't; bud whoiver 't wur, 'pend on't, lass, et's a chap 'at's a topper at t' letterin'.'

With this information, which, little as it was, went beyond Mr. Langstaff's knowledge, Nanny had to remain satisfied until she possessed herself of the epistle itself, and which, under her keenly awakened curiosity, she determined should be without further loss of time. And thereupon, having raked the fire, and donned bonnet and shawl, she locked the door, leaving Mr. Langstaff on the outside thereof, and trudged off as fast as her old limbs would carry her.

About an hour afterwards Nanny was wending her way up the other side of the common towards the further gate of the Hall, to the wonderment of half-a-dozen boys, who, from the school end of said common, were looking across it. Admitted at the back-door, the old woman was ushered into the presence

of the schoolmistress in the back parlour. As she rarely visited the place except when provoked or necessitated thereto by the imposition of some more than usually incorrigible lad, who refused to discharge his score on receipt of his quarterly allowance, Mrs. Kearas, without affording time to explain herself, commenced a deprecatory tirade against extravagance, and the culpability of one or two of the neighbours in encouraging it for their own gains, but which Mrs. Miller cut short by curtly demanding 'who was axing her for anything?' In truth, had she rendered an account for a *moiety* of her bad debts, many a boy would have found his quarter's pocket allowance considerably on the wrong side, without taking into account his school mulcts, for which, of course, the first claim was always made, as a sequence leaving Nanny's to be liquidated by the statute of limitations, which in her code seldom exceeded a year; and as Nanny's heart, like her crowdies and treacle possets, was too soft to persistently turn a poor, hungry, pleading boy away, it was not long before, under a slight restraint as to number, and at the extra cost of an admonitory lecture, the defaulter was reinstated to his forfeited place on her books, or rather the inside of her cupboard door, whose numerous chalked scores attested her proficiency in book-keeping, and her customers' in deglutition.

'Aw'm noa askin' a hawporth, bud aw'm wantin' the maister to be readin' this writin' tul ma,' said Nanny, as she took the letter out of her bosom and exhibited it to Mrs. Kearas.

'Letter?' responded the schoolmistress, taking it out of the other's hand, and turning it over and looking at the direction.

'Et's a gran' theng, a bit of eddikashoon; ev they'd nobbud fash'd wi' ma, when aw wur bit younger, they mud a' mad summat aht o' ma, an' happen aw'd ha' ben a scollard.'

'You may say that, Mistress Miller,—ten year at our 'Cademy lessonin' would ha' put the gilt on ye.'

'T' would ben th' makin' o' me. But what's it say?' alluding to the letter.

Unfortunately the schoolmistress had been equally deprived of the advantages she so charitably wished her neighbour; but as her educational deficiency would not have added to the *prestige* of Grumbleby if known, she began to fumble in her pockets for her glasses, and thereupon express her wonder as to what she had done with them, upon which Mrs. Miller informed her they were reposing behind the broad frill that ornamented

her cap, Mrs. Kearas having raised them to that position from her nose, on which they had reclined when entering the room. After expressing herself as to her strange forgetfulness, and having duly wiped and replaced them on her nasal, she put the letter through another course of exterior examination. Fortunately, in her dilemma, the schoolmaster's voice was heard in the passage-way, and Mrs. Kearas hurried after him, and sent him in to Mrs. Miller's assistance.

According to the mode in those days, the letter was folded and addressed on the back thereof, envelopes not then being in use, and as the schoolmaster broke the red seal and tore it open, he rather mangled it, and dropped therefrom a small enclosure which Nanny rose and picked up; amused at the dimensions thereof, as well as the oddity of one epistle being inside another, she exclaimed, with a dry laugh, 'Drot it, et's full o' young uns.'

Mr. Kearas, who had not observed its fall, took it out of the old woman's hand under the impression that it also had been received by her, looked suspiciously at her, read the address, and, as she returned to her seat, slipped it into his pocket, and commenced reading the one he had opened to himself.

'Red it oot, maister, soa as a bodie may harken.'

After a few preliminary coughs, during which Mr. Kearas adjusted his spectacles, he commenced reading.

'"Dear old Nanny"'—

'Well, nah, doan't he wroit nice?' interrupted the old lady.

'"Dear old Nanny,"' recommenced Mr. Kearas.

'An' he says 'at twice, bless him!' again interposed Mrs. Miller.

'"How's the crowdies?"' continued the schoolmaster, reading on without noticing the interruption.

'How's the crowdies? Lor' a me! tell 'im thur good—good as iver, on'y the mail's near oot, an' I mud get more.'

'"What rare times they were,"' resumed Mr. Kearas, still reading, '"when I used to flig away at a good stiff one, soused all over with treacle."'

'Ye may say 'at,' chimed in the old lady, 'bud whear'st coom throo, maister?'

Without heeding her question he read on,—'"I hope you let our boy have as many as he likes,—I'm responsible, you know; I'll put the money in the next parcel. Please give the enclosed to"— "Don't let old Kear"'— At each of these sentences the schoolmaster was taken with a fit of coughing, at the conclusion

of which he read to himself, until, admonished by Mrs. Miller, he resumed aloud, '"I often think of you, dear old Nanny, and will write you again soon. Remember me to all the boys. I am, dear Nanny, your old friend,

'"F. TRELAWNEY."'

'Nah hearken to yon,' exclaimed the old woman, wiping her eyes. 'An' aw'll nivver forget tha nither. Wal, wal an' 'at's throo Frenny,—he's th' cliverest lad 'at aw ivver met. To fraame they nice thengs, an' nivver mak' a mistak'. Aw dunno how he samm'd 't a' oop,—he's a credit to yur teachin', Maister Kearas.'

Mr. Kearas compressed his lips, shook his head and replied, 'Mrs. Miller, I'm often surprised myself at the learned boys that do leave this place; that boy 'll be Lord Chancellor yet.'

Her old warm heart full of gladness at this unexpected remembrance, and these kind expressions toward herself, Nanny hobbled off to the cottage, where some impatient customers were awaiting her arrival, and during the preparation of whose crowdies she detailed, with emendations and eulogiums, the occasion of her absence, which drew forth a very general desire to see the wonderful document, the receipt of such being as novel a circumstance to the boys as to herself. It was only then that Nanny recollected that the schoolmaster had not returned it to her. However, until she should have an opportunity of obtaining it, she consoled herself that it was all there, namely, in her head; and as that was well enveloped and bandaged in a huge cap, it would in all probability remain there, a more eligible place than the letter itself, seeing, whilst she could reproduce the contents from the former, she could not make out a word in the latter.

A very short space elapsed before the news spread throughout the school that Nanny had received a letter—a real 'wick' letter—from Trelawney, the astonishment whereat knew no bounds. The interest in the writer immediately revived, and such wonderful tales were related concerning him that he stood a chance of being canonized alongside of Ann Whittle, hitherto the greatest marvel of Grumbleby. But when it was stated that he had desired to be remembered to them all, they were incredulous, until the unprecedented circumstance was confirmed by the old lady herself, who was besieged by a host, each demanding in his turn 'if she was positive certain he said so; and then followed a round of questions,—'Did he mention me?'—'Did he say he saw

my father?'—'And when did he say I was to come home?' For no one imagined that a boy that would write a letter, and mention them, would stop short of the rest; but when, in their eagerness to obtain a sight of the marvellous sheet, they learned that Nanny had left it in Kearas' hands, a general burst of indignation ensued, and many were the not very complimentary epithets heaped on her luckless pate.

'Now they'd never know what was said about them, and old buffer kept it on purpose that they should not.'

Had it not been for the more potent reasoning of the stomach, Nanny would long have remained in the disgrace into which this untoward action of hers temporarily consigned her, and which was intensified in her casually mentioning the small letter that had been enclosed therein, and that she was unable to say for whom intended, but, as the master retained it, in all probability it was for himself; this, however, was strongly contested, every boy not yet relegated to the number of the hopeless being, from that circumstance, convinced it was for himself. The sequel was that, pestered beyond endurance, Nanny went the next day to the Hall and demanded her letter, which, after some evasions, she finally obtained, but, on being submitted to the inspection of the boys, the more learned insisted that it had been altered, especially as it said nothing about an enclosed letter, which Mrs. Miller insisted it did, only they could not read any more than herself.

A rather embarrassing claim, however, arose from the wording of the letter in one particular. As no name was mentioned, to whom did the title of 'dear boy' appertain? At least half-a-dozen insisted it applied to them, 'cos Trelawney always did like them, and many a time took their parts;' and it took something more powerful than the old woman's tongue, more than once, to interfere and decide between the contestants, and though Mape's knowledge of the transaction must have been confined to collaterals, yet, on being appealed to by Mrs. Miller, he remembered quite well that it meant Wilton, for if he had meant any one else it would have been himself, but which latter assertion was considered to rather weaken his testimony, even the former part not being without an inducement, for, as one remarked, 'he only said that cos he thought Wilton 'ud gie him a sup.'

Willie, whom it most concerned, appeared the least troubled in reference to the crowdy order. As the letter was read to him, his heart sank, and he turned away with bitter disappointment that he had not been more specifically referred to, and that no

intimation was contained therein that Frendzburgh had interested himself on his behalf, as so faithfully promised; and, in his despondency, he vowed he'd never touch one of his crowdies, nor think of him again. With a full heart, he hurried off to the plantation to give vent to his grief, and, as he plunged into its thickets, amid its silent shadows, he threw himself upon the green moss, and, buried in the old dried and the growing grass, he gave way to his feelings in deep and passionate sobs, until, exhausted, he fell into a fitful sleep, during which he was once more traversing the playground, his arm around Frendzburgh's waist, drinking in his protestations of lasting friendship, and listening to his promises of what he would do for him on his arrival in London; and, as the result of such promised interference, he was in St Martin's Lane, looking into the bird-fancier's window, and admiring the beautiful plumage of a bird of paradise, when a couple of soft hands descended over his eyes, and a silvery voice inquired who was it. Quickly turning round to laugh at his old playmate, the features were transformed to those of Mape, with whom he was the next instant running to hide behind a hillock on the moor, when they were seized by the schoolmaster and usher, who were lying in wait, and fastened by their ankles to a log with a couple of heavy chains, and driven before them until they reached Nanny Miller's, who ran out with a couple of treacle possets, that, as they held out their hands to take, became two letters, the superscription on each of which was for 'our dear boy.'

How long he might have continued this dreamy medley is problematical, but that Milly, who had slipped out of the house, and was wandering through the plantation in search of early spring flowers, unexpectedly came upon the sleeping lad as he lay on the ground. Seating herself by his side as noiselessly as possible, she leaned over him, and gazed sorrowfully into his bronzed peeky face, so changed since the first day of his entrance to the school, when his beautiful sunny features gained her heart at once. She had sat there but a few minutes, when a convulsive start, accompanied by a stifled cry, aroused her from her abstraction, and, gently putting aside the shaggy matted hair that covered his brow, she drew her hand over his sunken cheeks and kissed him. Awakened by the act, his eyes opened on Milly's face, and, starting up, he looked wildly round, still under the influence of his harassing dream. A few kind words from Milly reassured him, and he seated himself by her side. Taking his hands in

hers, she inquired if he was well, to which he replied indefinitely, and then withdrew his hand and gathered a few stalks of the long grass by his side, selecting four, with which he commenced plaiting a whip-lash. Milly proffered her assistance, and held the butt ends, whilst he silently continued the plaiting. Presently she repeated her question, whether anything ailed him, but, as he only shook his head and went on with his task, she regarded him thoughtfully, until, raising his eyes inadvertently to her, she said in a mild tone, 'I think I know what's a matter;' but as he made no reply, she continued, 'you're thinking of Mary Jones?'

'No, I wasn't,' returned Willie rather testily; 'and if I was, that would be no harm, would it?'

Milly was silent, and Wilton went on with his plaiting. Presently she ventured to ask, 'Is Mary as big as me?' He shook his head. 'As big as you?'

'Oh, I don't know,' said the peevish lad, 'bigger, I s'pose.'

'Was your Aunt hern,' pursued Milly, not at all disconcerted by his manner.

'Hern! No, of course she wasn't! how could she be her Aunt?'

'What makes you like her so, then?'

'Cos she was so good to me.'

A short pause ensued, during which the grass whip-thong was completed and laid aside, and four other stalks gathered, the butts of which the girl again held whilst he commenced another.

'Arn't I good to ye, Willie?' resumed Milly, looking up at him under her heavy brows.

'O yes, I s'pose you are,—only she'd'—he was at a loss to explain the difference, and added, without exactly meaning it, 'she'd give me everything.'

Milly's hand that was at liberty dived into her pocket, and she drew out a miscellaneous assortment of articles; spreading them in her lap, she said, 'Is any of them any use to you?'

He stopped his employment and cast his eyes over the strange medley, whilst the girl watched him with a pleasant look, in the hope that he would select something from the useless lot. He shook his head, and, straightening out the thong on his knee, returned to his employ.

A shade of disappointment passed over Milly's countenance, whilst she searched her pocket once more, but only drew out two or three trifles that had remained at the bottom thereof, which she added to the rest on her lap.

'What's that?' said Willie, attracted by one of the last articles, a thin flat piece of red wax about the size of his thumb-nail, the stamp on which he commenced an examination of. It had evidently been the seal of a letter.

Milly's countenance brightened, and she said, 'You can have it if you like, and I can get you some more.'

'Why, where did you get it?' exclaimed Willie, becoming animated, as he looked more intently at it. 'It's like one I got;' he commenced rummaging his pockets, but was unsuccessful, then added, 'Oh, it's gone.'

'Well, you can keep that,' said Milly, pleased that she had thus succeeded in creating a desire to possess one of her store.

'But where did you get it?'

'Oh, I sammed it off the floor. Yesterday, after old Crowdy Nan left the house, the master went for missus, and they went into the front room by theirselves, and I seed him reading a paper to her as I went in by chance, and she ordered me out. And this morning I picked that off the floor as I was sweeping.'

As Willie continued his examination of the impression on the wax, he became satisfied that it was made from a dough stamp or die, or rather from some bread that he and Frendzburgh had worked up into the shape of a seal, such as were suspended to watch ribbons for the purpose of sealing letters, the face whereof, whilst soft, the elder had stamped with a gilt button on which was a lion rampant. As Willie had taken an interest in the manufacture of the little article, he identified it by a small flaw in one of the paws.

'Milly,' said he, coupling the information just given with a description of the figure on the improvised stamp. 'Did you say this came off a letter?'

'A letter! how'd that get on a letter?'

'Don't you know that's what they put on letters to keep them shut?'

'No, it warn't; it was on the floor.'

Without noticing this remark, as well as some others that followed, Willie was revolving in his mind the connection of the seal with the smaller letter spoken of by Nanny as having dropped out of the letter to herself when opened by the schoolmaster, and which she assumed to have belonged to him, since he had retained it. He recalled to mind Frendzburgh's promise, as he took the stamp off the projecting ledge over the granary archway, where it had been deposited to harden in the sun, that

the very first impression made therewith should be on the wax that sealed a letter to himself, and by which token, before opening it, he would know from whom it came.

'Milly,' said he, at the conclusion of these reflections, 'could you find out what this came off of—if it was a letter?'

'How'd I do that?'

'Oh, you know best. I'm sure you could if you tried.'

The girl returned the articles in her lap to her pocket, and closed her eyes, wrapped in thought, and then opening them quickly, replied, 'I'll ask him.'

'O no, don't do that; they'd find out what you done and punish you.'

'I wouldn't care for that to please you.'

'But it wouldn't please me. I'd be sorry to get you in a scrape.'

'Would you?' exclaimed Milly, her dull eyes glistening and her countenance lightening up with an expression of delight. 'Would you? You'd be sorry if they hurt me? Then I'll get the letter, you see if I don't.'

'Was there one, then, Milly?'

'Didn't you say that came off it?'

'I'm afraid, Milly, you won't go the right way about it.'

Her countenance fell and she looked embarrassed, then said inquiringly, 'Wouldn't I? How'll I go, then?'

'Don't say anything to anybody about it, but just keep your ears and eyes open.'

'And then will I see it?' replied the simple girl.

Some ungallant and not very complimentary thoughts passed through Willie's mind, but a look into the earnest face of the poor girl stayed their expression; then, as though suddenly realizing afresh the hopelessness of his situation, or of anything turning up in his favour, he exclaimed in a broken tone, 'Oh, never mind,—it don't matter. You needn't trouble about me. No one cares about me now, O dear, dear!' He threw himself along the ground on his face, and gave way once more to his overcharged heart. Quite unprepared for such an ebullition, Milly felt at a loss how to act; but soon her unsophisticated heart began to share in the boy's grief, and, bending over him, she whispered, 'Don't greet, Willie,—don't take on so; I care about ye,' and continued speaking in this strain until he appeared to have overcome his paroxysm, and she raised him into a sitting posture, supporting him by her strong, stout arm. After a brief space he fidgeted

away from her arm, and gathered up the whip-thongs, and, placing them in his cap, inquired in a more collected tone, 'Have you been long here, Milly?'

'Just before you waked.'

'No, I mean, have you been long at this place—at the school?' She leaned her elbow on her knee, and, supporting her chin with her hand, looked abstractedly into the bushes in front of her, whilst her mind went back, in response to the boy's question, to gather up such fragments as might afford data whereby to shape her answer, but as the operation was perplexing, it was long in forthcoming, whilst the boy waited patiently, watching the changing expressions of her countenance. At length, breaking the silence, he repeated his question, 'Is it long, Milly, since you first came to this hateful place?'

'Ever so long!' ejaculated the girl, rising from her bent position, and extending her arm to its full length by way of illustration.

'Ever so long!' repeated the boy. 'Two years?'

'Two years! Oh, far more.'

'More than two years!—you haven't been three?'

'I don't know. I don't know how many, but I know it's a long, long time since.'

'How big were you,—as big as I was when I came first?'

'So big,' said the girl, raising her hand about three feet from the ground.

'Only that big! that was littler than me. Do you remember it?'

'Don't I!' said she emphatically.

'Who brought you?'

'A man.'

'A man,—but who was he?'

Milly gazed into the bush for an instant, and replied, 'Don't know.'

'Was he a good man?' said the boy. She started to her feet and looked down upon him sternly, and then exclaimed in a bitter tone, 'A good man! and leave me here?'

'O no!' responded the lad, 'he wasn't good, he wasn't good!' and he was about yielding again to his late abandonment, when he was arrested by the passionate utterances of the girl, whose wild flashing eyes and matted long hair (at that moment lifted by a passing wind), as she stamped her foot, and with clenched teeth stretched out her thick bare arm, pointing to the water flowing below, awed him into silence. 'Good! better he'd chucked

ıe into that river, and I'd gone over those falls, and been crushed ıder the mill-wheel. Better he'd knocked out my brains and ırown me to rot in yon old castle, than'— Her eyes fell upon 'illie's shrinking form, and she stopped and sank down by his de, and said in a calmer voice, 'What's the matter? No, I am ad he didn't, because I'm here to watch over you; don't take ı as I did. I'll get the letter, Willie.'

'O no, don't, Milly, there's a good girl,' rejoined the lad, arful it might result in further evil to the stricken one; 'I don't ınt it now; don't, there's a dear.'

The words 'good girl' and 'dear' fell upon poor Milly's ear ;e the sweet notes of a long-forgotten melody; to her such ɔrds had not been spoken for years; it is not strange, therefore, at, overcome by her aroused emotions, she threw her arms around e frail boy, and passionately kissed and hugged him. Again ıd again she repeated the action, in spite of Willie's struggles, ıtil a sound of rustling among the bushes warned them that ɔme one was approaching, when she crouched down and crept viftly through the underwood, and escaped just as Mape, who ad been in search of Willie, came up and led him off to the anks of the river.

CHAPTER LI.

A TIME OF WEEPING.

MIDSUMMER was approaching, and with it the return to Grumbleby of the time of weeping. And did the Grumbleby boys only weep at midsummer? It would have been well for them, much to their comfort, if not advantage, had they had occasion at no other period to do so. It must be conceded it was an unseasonable time of year (if season had aught to do with producing the annual Bochim, and it had), midsummer being a period usually anticipated by schoolboys with great glee.

The tearful month of April would have been more appropriate, had fitness between the act and the month been a consideration, but whilst the 'greeting' came regularly with the season, the season was not the *moving* cause. Though professing to ignore all precedents in the conduct of these scholastic solecisms, the Yorkshire colleges had nevertheless adopted one custom from other such institutions, and that was to permit their charge to communicate twice a year, namely, at midsummer and Christmas, with their *anxious* and *interested* parents and guardians,—not to announce the coming vacation and consequent return to their loving embraces, as well as to evidence their progress, but for the latter purpose only, and in respect to the former, rather to impress upon those individuals that they need be under no apprehension that the authorities had any intention of breaking faith with them by sanctioning the undesirable descent of the expatriated youths upon their peaceful homes.

It was no doubt with much gratification that the said parents and others received these periodical proofs of improvement, and learned that their offspring or charges retained so vivid a sense of their parental kindness, and still lived to commemorate it by these semi-annual reminders, thus relieving them, too, of all fear from the possible eventuality, in the interim, of their having,

as the boys gracefully designated it, 'kicked the bucket,' which would have occasioned much heartfelt sorrow, at least at the Academy, where the sorrow consequent on the loss of the pupil would be enhanced by the loss of twenty pounds per annum and extras. Of course the pleasure derived by the friends on receipt of these juvenile epistles did not exceed that of the schoolmasters who placed them in their hands, with a glowing encomium on the rapid progress and wonderful attainments of the writer, of which, if the said epistles were the evidences, they were *wonderful* indeed, as will presently be better judged.

But what still more gratified the principals of these select academies on these periodical visits, was the anxiety with which their presence was awaited by the fond parents, whose delight at entrusting their children to such excellent and unrivalled management was only exceeded by their delight at getting rid of them at so cheap a rate.

But why did they weep?—that is, as we have said, the boys, not the parents and guardians. It might easily be imagined that, as they had become so indurated as to render the extraction of any moisture from such dried carcases extremely difficult, there could hardly have existed a reserve sufficient to exude at the ordinary place of exit in the shape of a tear, and yet it was a time of weeping. There is a time for all things, says the Wise Man in God's own beautiful book, hence there is a time of weeping, and it had now arrived at Grumbleby.

'Mr. Grippem,' demanded Mr. Kearas, junior, who on this important occasion always took charge of the school, 'are all the slates ruled?'

'All ruled, sir,' replied the usher, who, assisted by Mr. Shadd, had been occupied for some time the previous day in ruling round text on the dilapidated articles deposited on his desk for that purpose. As many of these were composed of house tiles or grauwacke slate picked up in old quarries, and, in common with the veritable article, well scratched and greasy, the production of any very distinguishable or straight lines was a performance of some difficulty, and in some cases had called forth all Mr. Shadd's ingenuity to obtain more than a faint trace of his pencil, such extra marred surfaces, after having exhausted Mr. Grippem's patience, being handed to his sub for his further essay.

'All ruled, sir.'

'Then let the monitors pass them round;' which having been

done, and all disputes settled as to who owned this tile, or that vestige of arenaceous rock, Mr. Kearas commanded silence, and requested to be informed if every boy's pencil was sharpened, and all in readiness to commence and follow him as he dictated. Being answered in the affirmative, he very deliberately surveyed the room, and addressing them, began, 'Now, boys, we are once more called on to perform'—a rapid scratching of slates accompanied these words—'a duty that must'—

'Please, sir, what's after "Now, boys"?'

'Sir,' exclaimed Mr. Kearas, as he directed his attention to the inquirer, a frown gathering on his brow.

'What's arter perform, sir?' sang out another at the end of the room.

'What's a matter with them boys, Mr. Grippem? can't you see and keep 'em quiet whilst I'm speaking?'

Thereupon Mr. Grippem stepped over to the nearest inquirer, and, by a dexterous manœuvre between the movements of the dodging elbows, succeeded in bestowing a box on each ear, and then, spitting on his slate, ordered him to wipe out what he had written under the impression that Mr. Kearas' address was the beginning of the letter—a proceeding that was very rapidly imitated by the whole school, thereby precluding the necessity of the usher's further interference on that behalf.

'Well, boys,' continued Mr. Kearas, order having been restored, 'as I was about saying, again it's your delightful opportunity to write to your beloved parents and guardians, whose feelings on receipt thereof I leave you to imagine, especially at the signs of improvement (let's have no blots nor scratches this time), but most of all as they once more find it to be your great desire to remain under the care of them as are more than parents to you all. Now, then, pencils ready!' The major part of these articles, it should be remarked, were pieces broken off from their fragmentary writing apparatus. 'The beautiful composition I am about to dictate to you, I need scarcely say, is, as usual, the composition of my excellent father, whose great heart would allow no other hand to trace its overflowing, else I could have done it as well. Now then, ready!'

'"My dear Father and Mother,"'—again a great noise of scratching of slates. 'Done that?' No answer. 'Very well. "It is with great pleasure:"'—two boys seen whispering. 'What's the matter with you, Cognod?'

'Please, sir, is "done that" in the same line as "father and nother"?'

Mr. Kearas looked at his copy and read to himself, but not ›eing able to find the word quoted, looked up, and requested to ›e informed where it came in.

'Arter mother,' responded another boy, who had just finished he word.

'There's no such word anywhere. Mr. Grippem, it's strange ›ou can't attend to those boys.' Whereupon that official made he circuit of the desk, and cuffed the offender's ears despite the nanipulated slate raised in defence.

'Now, again; and every boy attend,—"My dear father and nother."'

'Are we to write that again, please, sir?' interposed a big boy.

'No, sir! only once. Go on,—"It is with great pleasure we ake up our pens once more to address you."' Some small boys, ınable to keep pace, were teasing their neighbours for the next vord. '"The state of our health remains—the same—at this ›resent—which we hope—you do"— No, no, no; that's wrong! ·ub that out.' Whereupon several boys, wetting the palms of :heir hands, began a vigorous cleansing of their slates, effectually expunging all they had written.

'What are you at there?' demanded the junior schoolmaster.

'Rubbing it all out, sir, as you said,' cried out a boy who had just accomplished this feat.

'Mr. Shadd, why don't you move yourself, and instruct those boys?'

Mr. Shadd hobbled about, and, having ascertained the actual state of matters, looked to the bottom of the room and then to the top, and finally askance at Mr. Grippem, who relieved him by requesting those who had rubbed out what they had written to stay in after school and copy it from the others, and in the meantime to go on from the next word given out by Mr. Kearas.

Mr. Kearas recommenced. 'Now, have you rubbed out "you do"?—Well, then, write "yours does. I am still very happy,"'—a slight movement. '"Everybody's so kind,"'—greater movement,—'"especially our dear Mr. and Mrs. Kearas and their son, our other principal, Mr. Minas Kearas, as well as all the professors, whom we love and esteem."' The boys appeared quite touched by these endearing allusions to the principals and others, for they dug the words into their slates with extra force.

It may be incidentally remarked that there was a small squad of lads that were always excused from taking part in this exercise, from the simple fact that they had either no one to write to, or it was understood to be the parental wish not to be troubled with these unpleasant reminders of their promising state; of course, amongst this number was Mape. These boys were always congregated by themselves at a desk in one corner of the room, one or two of whom were usually more or less affected, whilst the rest, totally indifferent to their lot, were enjoying the scene hugely, and gave expression thereto, on every occasion when a fresh pang was experienced by the privileged ones, either by grimaces or other silent demonstrations, such as hugging one another as the terms of endearment flowed forth, or wiping their eyes at any allusion to separations.

'"You need not come to see us!"' continued the schoolmaster, reading from his copy.

'I won't write that,' whispered one of the last arrivals.

A sudden grip of his hair by the usher, whose proximity he had not calculated on, settled that question. '"Nor send for me to come home for a long time yet."'

'O my!' sobbed aloud another late arrival, whereat a flood of tears, that had been gathering in volume, and was with difficulty restrained until now, copiously overflowed and came pouring down several cheeks, and, before they could be overtaken, had fallen in drops on the slates, whence, mopped up in eager haste, several words were obliterated.

'"We are growing so,"' continued the schoolmaster, too intent on his reading to notice the disturbance, '"you would not know us again."'

'Aw'm bail for that there,' whispered Mape; 'soom on 'em wouldn't knaw theirsel's if they seed their own picturs.'

'"The fine bracing air and food of like quality"'—pursued the master.

'That's so,' muttered another of the non-letter-writers, 'the food and the air are very much alike.'

'"Are effecting wonders; we are getting quite stout."'

'Luk at ma,' said Mape in the same low tone, at the same time making a cracking noise, as he shook his bones inside his clothes, the latter well adapted for any one in process of fattening.

'"Give my love to my dear brothers and sisters."'

'Please, sir, am I to write that?'

'Of course you are; why not?'

'Cos I ain't got no brother and sister.'

'Go on, and don't dare interrupt again.' And thereupon another, who was just about to follow suite, and suggest he had not a mother, at least when he left home, in all probability a very strong reason for his leaving, contented himself with just whispering that fact to the next boy. As they were all considered to stand in the same happy position relatively, no alteration of a composition upon which, Mr. Minas asserted, his learned father had bestowed much thought in rendering applicable to all was tolerated. As a consequence, several found themselves in a new or revived relationship. Puzzling, however, as it might have been to themselves, it must have been far more so to the parties to whom the epistles were addressed, in some cases proving not only startling, but embarrassing, the difficulty of communicating with the dead not being less in London than elsewhere.

The dictation being terminated with the usual affectionate conclusion, the next procedure was the showing up of slates, followed by the abortive attempt at deciphering the remarkable collection, in which both master and ushers engaged. The number of syllables, the quantity of letters, the hieroglyphics, or, more correctly, enchorial characters, and their ingenious combination, would have elicited the astonishment, if not the admiration, of a De Sacy or Young in their efforts at interpretation, but as neither of those eminent men were numbered amongst the professors at Grumbleby, the majority of the slates had to be cleaned under pressure, the auxiliary aid of the cane being called into requisition, and a fresh attempt made at writing out the composition. But as there was no ruling this time, the lines rose and fell and twisted in such wavy, and circular, and other sinuous curvatures of beauty, that the words became so blended as to be more unreadable than on the first effort. The only remedy that suggested itself was to select the most expert, and, as he stood by the side of the usher and wrote down the words whilst given out, to take him as a sample for the rest; but this, too, was found impracticable, the shouts and cuffs of the irritated teacher soon rendering it impossible for the boy to write another word. Whereupon a consultation took place between the junior master and the two teachers, and it was finally concluded that the two latter should each make a copy of the letter, and then hand them to the monitors, who were to see that they were written out by every boy by the next morning, when they were

to be transferred to their copy-books, prior to their transcription to letter-paper.

The next day came, too quickly for some, who, notwithstanding their incessant efforts, had failed to accomplish the task. An unusual amount of diligence had, however, been manifested by all, and never had greater exertions been made to succeed. Here and there a genius, whose natural abilities exceeded his educational advantages, had mastered the task, and lent his slate to some half-dozen others, who, gathering around it, leaned over those seated at the desk, and, despite the frequent interruptions occasioned by digs of elbows and fists, and thrusting back of superincumbent weights, persevered until, every now and again, another pushed his way out of the press, and by sundry capers and shouts announced his success in completing the copy; whereupon he was besieged by several others for the loan of *his* slate. The result, as a whole, was but a slight improvement on the previous day's work, and the correction of the orthography and mystical characters again taxed the ingenuity and tempers of Mr. Kearas, junior, and his assistants, as well as continued the weeping of the pupils, and it was only at the end of the fourth day that all was pronounced in readiness for the next step, a more trying one even than the first, and during which both teachers and scholars were wound up to the highest pitch, the former of exasperation, and the latter of trepidation. At length something intended for a fac-simile appeared in the several copy-books, after an exhaustive effort, occupying another period that extended the essay to beyond a week, and brought them to the third stage in this time of weeping, viz. the attempt at the veritable documents that were to be the occasion of such admiration to their recipients, both by the terseness of the wording and the beauty of the penmanship, alike marvellous, but most of all by the wonderful attachment shown to Grumbleby and its conductors, the continuance of which they were exhorted not to disturb.

If the effort to make a fair copy in their books had been at the expense of so much time and labour, it was not very probable that the further and more important effort would meet with better success. Swollen hands, bruised arms, and aching backs were not very promising material or machinery with which to get off any superior, or even improved edition, but as it was a climax imperatively necessary to reach, the effort was commenced.

To every boy a clean sheet of faintly-ruled paper was dis-

tributed, it being intended that the lines should be rubbed out on the completion of the letters, in order to convey the impression that they were written without such schoolboy aid; and, after an exordium from Mr. Minas as to the advisability of making no mistakes, and the penalty in default thereof, several attempts at a commencement were made, but in most instances prevented by the trembling state of the hands, or the nervous condition of the writer. Gradually, however, a general scratching of pens was heard throughout the school, increasing in volume as the writers became more emboldened at their success, which was not interfered with by any supervision for the first ten minutes; but at the conclusion thereof the junior master descended from his seat, and, joined by Messrs. Grippem and Shadd, commenced an examination of the progress made, a course that had the effect of causing a hiatus in the penmanship of such as were in their immediate neighbourhood, followed by a peremptory order to 'go on,' but which resulted in such an extra shaking of the hands, that it became necessary to make an effort to extract the joggles therefrom by an application of the cane to the afflicted members, which specific, whilst it partially succeeded, so operated that all the fingers suddenly became thumbs, whereby the further hold of the said pens by the digits was rendered impracticable.

'M-o-t-t-t,' repeated a boy in a semi-key, as he saw the teacher approaching, hoping to convey the impression that he was making great efforts to accomplish a task that was sorely puzzling him.

'Thur arn't three t's,' whispered his next schoolmate.

'Arn't thur?—well, I only got two.'

'Well, there's nobbud yun.'

'Arn't thur?—what'll I do?'

'Rub 't oot.'

As there was no time to lose, the usher being by this time in uncomfortable proximity, the boy wet his thumb and rubbed at the surplus t, until it disappeared behind a very decided black mark, that had one virtue, that of effectually preventing the detection of the error.

'O my!' said a consoling friend below him, 'won't you catch it!'

'What for?' said the dismayed boy, as he ruefully gazed at the blotch. 'Well, didn't Trotter tell me to?'

'Oh! oh! what a whopper! Never! Don't go blaming it on

me, now, or I'll'— He was prevented finishing the sentence, as at that moment, impelled by the hands of Mr. Grippem, his head came into such violent contact with the other's, that a sensation somewhat resembling thunder and lightning, with innumerable floating stars, diverted both their attention from any further critical observations, whilst, satisfied with his dexterity, the usher passed on without noticing the blotch.

'Look out! There, now, yo mad me do that!' exclaimed another at the other side of the desk, as a large blot fell upon his paper, caused by his unpremeditatedly spearing a fly with his pen, that was lying at the bottom of the inkstand.

'Me! Oh, an't that a whacker?—Did I, now?' appealing to the boy on the other side, who only ventured to look up under his brows, lest he should attract the undesirable attention of the usher, and then whispered,

'Lick it off, Jones, with your tongue; that's how I does.'

'Do 'ee?'

No sooner advised than done; result, a long, watery streak right up to the top of the sheet of paper, followed by an amazed look by the licker at the astounding effect, and an accusation against his counsellor, but who coolly informed him 'that was 'cause he didn't lick hard enough,' whilst one opposite said he ought to have done as he did, holding up his paper, through which a hole was visible, he having just succeeded, with the corner of his broken-bladed pen-knife, in digging out a superfluous letter in a misspelt word, and, wagging his head, he felicitated himself that 'Grippem would never see that again.'

Thus for a few days the task went on, until both principals and boys, raised to as high a temperature as endurable in those dog-days, were used up; when such letters as remained unwritten, and it was pretty certain would remain so without an amanuensis, were taken hold of by the ushers, and, by the direction of Mr. Kearas, were written by them in disguised hands.

Taken as a whole, the correspondence was quite unique, not only in the specimens of large hand, small text, and round, but in the original shapes of the letters, and other peculiarities that, perhaps, would be best described in the quaint language of Sydney Smith, who, speaking of one of his own epistolary productions, said, 'It was as if a swarm of ants, escaping from an ink-bottle, had walked over a sheet of paper without wiping their legs.'

CHAPTER LII.

THE PRAYER-MEETING.

A LONG wearisome year and more—and oh, how wearisome to Willie!—had elapsed since his induction as a student at Grumbleby Hall, during which period many other incidents than those recorded, of an equally strange and peculiar character, were daily transpiring. He had entered, a confiding, trustful, truthful lad, redolent of qualities that, fragrant and attractive by their ingenuousness and transparency, gracefully set off the beauty of his symmetrical person; whilst the mellow bloom that tinged the fair cheek of his delicately-outlined face attested to a redundancy of health. A short twelve or fourteen months, and how changed!—so much so that even Miss Austen, or his playmate Mary, would scarcely have recognised their idol in that ill-clothed, unkempt lad, who, with sallow, pinched features, dejected look, and leaden eye, sat by the beck side, listlessly casting in broken sticks, and watching them as they floated away, or day after day, at one time or the other, sat on the stone at the corner of the road, vacantly gazing across the common, his eyes ever in one direction, as though expecting each moment one of those loved ones, or some other well-remembered form, to emerge from the road at the farther angle, the cherished expectation growing in intensity ever since Frendzburgh's departure, that they or he would at last appear to reclaim him from his bondage; until, wearied and disappointed, as on the previous day, he would rise and re-enter the gate, and, as it slammed, exclaim in piteous tone, 'No, they won't come! they won't come!' and then, avoiding the ever-watchful Mape, plunge into the plantation, there, in its solitude, to give a fresh vent to the grief that, hastened by his wretched treatment, was fast sapping all vitality from his physical frame, as well as loosening the spiritual tie thereto.

There were not wanting indications, now and then, in the conduct both of Mr. and Mrs. Kearas towards Willie, of an unusual attention to him, that did not fail to impress the more observant that there was some operating cause, more powerful than either their own inclinations or any peculiar regard entertained towards him. At such times their revived interest was of so worrying a nature, that the object thereof rather avoided than courted it, but as it rarely extended beyond a few days, he was soon relieved therefrom. However, the periodical occurrence of these spasmodic ebullitions evidenced that Willie was cared for by some friend, and had not been suffered to merge into the beaten track of the generality of his schoolmates, in whose estimation he therefore rose proportionately, especially as at such seasons he invariably received an extra allowance of pocket-money, and which, rich as it rendered him in the eyes of the less-favoured scholars, they judged, from long-established precedent, would only be a moiety of the amount actually received by the schoolmaster on his account. Although now seldom partaking himself of Nanny's comestibles, he more frequently resorted to the cottage than ever, often accompanied, in addition to Mape, by one of the uncared-for, whose stomach, if not his heart, was made glad by a treat to one of Mrs. Miller's famous productions.

This abstention on Willie's part could not but be observed by the good old lady, not because it affected her sales, but for reasons that more sensibly touched her rough but kindly nature. From long acquaintance with Grumbleby developments, she had become too familiar with these premonitory symptoms not to be conscious of their evil portent, and often, after executing some orders on his account of the nature referred to, as the poor hungry boy so treated at Willie's expense was voraciously devouring his crowdy, she would seat herself on the short form leaning against the wall, on which Willie sat pensively watching her manipulations, and draw him to her side and gently press his aching brow to her shoulder; or lift him into her lap and lay his head on her breast, at the same time threatening to expel the jeering boys, who, long strangers to such an exhibition of tenderness, regarded it as babyish and derogatory to their premature manliness.

It was on one such occasion as this, in the absence of any other boy than Mape, whose attention was the while absorbed in a plate of flummery, the scalding heat whereof had compelled

him to eject the first spoonful, and hurry off with the plate to the door-step to expedite its cooling, that Nanny happened to give expression to some remarks of a serious nature, such as once were familiar to Willie. His eyes brightened, and he looked earnestly up at her, and asked, in a tone that showed their effect on him, 'who told her those things?'

She drew her hand around his face, and, pushing the hair from off his forehead, looked tenderly at him as she answered, 'Whar ded aw heear 't? ma bonnie barn, an' ded tha nivver hear 't afore?'

'O yes, Granny, my Aunt used to talk that way.'

'Ded shoo noo? then shoo mun be a gooid sister.'

'O no! she was my Aunt.'

Mrs. Miller did not explain that she intended by the term used a sort of spiritual relationship, for, with her large grey eyes fixed on the boy, as her arm encircled and pressed his spare frame to her side, she was pondering the seeming contradiction, how the person alluded to could be a *good* sister, and yet abandon or at best consign the keeping of such a child to those amongst whom his lot was now cast.

In response to this rising thought she resumed, 'Ha' coom'd tha gooid Aunt ta send tha heear?'

'It wasn't her sent me; O no, she wouldn't send me! she wanted to keep me.'

'Ded shoo nah?—aw'd thenk soa. Wha then, bonny, ded? Thi mither?'

'No, I don't think I've got any mother.'

She drew the boy closer. 'Noa, noa, tha needna tel't me 'at, laddie,—noa mither 'ud send tha heear, bless tha! tha puir mitherless barn,—t' owd tale,—soom gran' unwed womun's lamb; —little tha knaws, an' little tha'lt ivver knaw, ov 'ur sorrow an' shame, puir soul. Mebbe shoo's deead;' and then, with a sigh, she added, as she looked into his thin, pale face, 'An' thal't happen sooin be aht o' t' gate, wi' 'im as ca'd all t' barns rahnd 'im whol in t' world. Wall, thear's noan on uz bud 'ave sum fawts, an' aw'm nobbud a sinner mysel', an' ut's little aw con dae, bud yunce aw'd a dowter an' an owd man, bud daddy an' dowter's gaan deead, an' so it's bud reyt as aw' dae wot aw can for other's barns, an' may Him wha's aboon uz all keepit thi heeart as pure throo sin as 'tis this day.' Saying which the old woman brushed away a tear, and bent her head and kissed the boy's brow.

Although not quite comprehending Nanny's soliloquy, he

understood sufficient to be aware, for the first time, that she once had a daughter, and thereupon, becoming interested, commenced plying the old woman with questions regarding her, that soon drew a plentiful stream down her furrowed cheeks, as in her recital she dwelt with a mother's exaggeration on the superlative excellences of the little Nanny, whom she had consigned to the grave at about the same age as Willie, two years subsequent to the death of the husband and father.

By this time Mape, who had got through his flummery, and given the last lick to the plate, had accommodated himself on a low three-legged stool, and, leaning his head on his two hands, was listening to the sorrowful recital with open mouth.

'Was it long before I came here?' questioned Willie.

'Long, hay? Shoo's ben deead moar nur thirty yeears, bud et's seemin' bud yesterneit; an' when t' day's wark's aat, an' aw'm aloan, an' all's husht in t' haase, occun see at times ma poar little lass sittin' on t' bench there.' Mape involuntarily rose and drew closer. 'Bud 'at's ower, an mebbe 't's best, for ut's a cowd wurld, an' shoo's goan t' a better.'

She paused and wiped her face with the corner of her apron. The boys looked at each other and then at her, and for a little while each seemed buried in his own thoughts, until, interrupted by a fresh arrival, they quietly took their leave. But on many a subsequent visit Willie would draw from the old dame the recital of some fresh incident in the brief life of little Nanny, that the one never tired of relating, nor the other of listening to.

As Mape became sensible of the increasing attachment between Mrs. Miller and his charge, he would have become proportionably jealous thereat, but that the former, learning the relationship in which he had been placed to the boy by her old favourite, took occasion, by times, to testify her approval thereof by a mode best appreciated by him, the gratuitous bestowal of a crowdy; a course, however, attended with one drawback, that it rendered the cottage more attractive than always desirable, as, on most occasions of Willie's disappearance, he set off full speed to that attractive place in search of him, before seeking him elsewhere. Like some other guardians, Mape did not find his wardership altogether a bad thing, though to the ward himself it became at times irksome, and a decided infringement on the liberty of the subject.

Just at this period a threatened interruption to Willie's visitations to Nanny unexpectedly took place. On more than one

occasion, whilst absent from the school ground, it had happened that he had been required by Mrs. Kearas for some domestic purpose, whereby she became aware that he was in the habit of spending a great part of his spare time at the cottage. Thereupon, either from jealousy of any one but herself exercising an influence over him, which of late, for some reason, she had evidenced a desire to do, or from a fear of connivance in affording facility for a secret correspondence, which the recent letter addressed to her, with its enclosure, had awakened suspicions of, she deemed it prudent to interfere, and prohibit his further visitations to the old woman.

Upon a representation of the case to Nanny by Willie, who, with herself, felt the deprivation keenly, unable to tamely submit, and with the boy's concurrence, the worthy dame started off to the Hall to remonstrate against so arbitrary a proceeding. At first the schoolmistress was inexorable, pointing out, with great volubility, the danger that would result to the school were she to lose that material hold of the dear boys' affections which she trusted Mrs. Miller did not question she possessed, and by which alone she could hope to sway so many young and volatile hearts; an idea that at once brought the schoolmaster, who had at first been inclined to accede to Nanny's request, over to her views, embracing, as they did, a proposition that his illogical inactive mind would never have conceived, or worked out to such *remote* effects, but now fully comprehending, he concurred with Mrs. Kearas in the impossibility of incurring so great a risk.

But Mrs. Miller had set her heart on obtaining the object of her mission, and, notwithstanding the insinuation, more than once made, of being actuated by some sinister motive, persevered with a pertinacity that had well-nigh defeated her purpose, until she startled them by drawing their attention to what Mr. Kearas' affectionate watchfulness over him had failed to discover, namely, the evident declining health of the boy. In the case of most of the other boys, even this might have failed to gain over the recusant schoolmistress and her husband, but with this boy it was different: the valuable consideration, added to prudential reasons, turned the scale, and, as Nanny proceeded to point out some corroborations of her statement, such as his failing appetite, languid air, and feverish flush, the two worthies became alarmed. Fearful, however, that Mr. Kearas might *now* entertain some doubt of the extent of her penetration, and that Mrs. Miller might leave with an impression not so flattering in regard to her

maternal solicitude, Mrs. Kearas immediately applied her snuffy pocket-handkerchief to her tearless eyes, and in broken tones, that gradually strengthened into loud protestations, assured Mrs. Miller that it was nothing new to her, but that she had endeavoured to spare her husband's feelings by hiding it from him, clinging to the hope, in which she still indulged, that she might be mistaken. The thought was too heart-rending to entertain. Still she feared, as she had hinted to her husband, that it was possible he was a *little* unwell. As this statement appeared to be new to the obtuse Mr. Kearas, he looked over at her in astonishment, and was in the act of requesting to be informed when she ever told him so, but that an ominous look from his affectionate spouse rendered it unnecessary; and she proceeded to inform the old lady that her dear husband's time and attention was so taken up in preparing the studies of the boys, and instructing their minds, that she thought, were it not for her, it would escape the recollection of all the learned fraternity, principals and ushers, not excepting Tommy and Jurdy, that their pupils had *stomachs* and *mouths*, as well as heads to fill; which threw a great responsibility upon her, their corporals requiring as much attention as did their aforesaid heads, especially in the matter of physicking, and which reminded her that she had just formed the intention of placing the boy referred to under medical treatment, and by the administration of a due modicum of brimstone and treacle, hoped in a very short time to restore him to perfect health. But as Mrs. Miller was observed to shake her head at this part of her long statement, Mrs. Kearas stopped, and then, addressing her in a semi-ironical tone, requested to be informed what *she* would recommend, as her experience must be so much more extensive than her own.

Had Nanny Miller ventured to recommend anything, it would have been a little more substantial food, such as beef, mutton, or even chicken, but she had wit enough to perceive that she had gone quite far enough for one sitting, if she had no wish to frustrate the purpose that brought her there, and so, reserving to herself the privilege of applying that peculiar treatment, she merely shook her bonnetless head again; but as this only aggravated the matter, Mrs. Kearas repeated her question with greater emphasis, whereupon Mrs. Miller wisely fell in with the other's view, and, in a deferential manner, suggested whether she did not think it would conduce more to the effective operation of the staple medicine, if administered to the boy in homœopathic doses, but as that would occasion more time and trouble than

Mrs. Kearas could be expected to have at her disposal with so extensive a charge to look after, she would herself undertake it without cost to the establishment.

This would, of course, necessitate the renewal of Willie's attendance at the cottage, but as that did not appear on the surface, and it would relieve the institution in the direction indicated by the sagacious woman, it was deemed on the latter account worthy of consideration, and finally agreed to; and, on the further humble representation of Nanny, who urged it as a slight recreation that might aid the medicinal course, and prove a relaxation to his mind, enfeebled by his *multitudinous* studies, consent was given to his accompanying her one evening in the week to 'meetin'.'

'Wall, bonnie!' exclaimed Nanny the next day, as Willie entered her door, followed by Mape, who overtook him as he entered the garden gate, 'aw'm goan th' neet tull th' chapel, an' aw'm gettin' leave t' tak' tha wi' me; witta cum?' Willie's eyes brightened as he said, with unwonted animation,

'O yes, Granny, I am so glad!' but the next instant, looking at his torn, patched apparel, he raised his eyes to her face and waited. Comprehending his meaning, she exclaimed,

'Tut, tut, man! dust thenk tha duds mak' ony odds tull fowk at chapel? Goa home an cum back when tha's dun souper, an' doan't tha be laat.'

Willie trudged off with spirits unusually elated, still followed by Mape, who, however, was somewhat cast down, notwithstanding the assurance of the former that he would only be absent for a short time. Poor Mape was pondering, as he had often done on such occasions, why nobody cared for him like Nanny did for his young friend, and further, that even his presence was only tolerated on the other's account; and as Willie, on his arrival at the playground, became occupied in making himself as decent as water and rubbing down with grass and scraping with his knife would make him, he wandered off to the plantation, where he solaced himself in hunting for birds' nests.

Before the time named, Willie was with his kind old friend, who further aided in his toilet by exchanging his dilapidated cap for a straw hat that had belonged to the younger Nanny, but had been carefully laid by amongst other treasured relics, and, standing him on a chair, by a stitch here and there contrived to make his garments appear a little less ragged, whilst a pin or two supplied the place of buttons where required, and a piece of

black tape in each of his shoes rendered the fear of his casting them on the road less probable. At the conclusion she turned him round for an inspection, and, kissing his cheek as she lifted him off the chair, declared he was quite a dandy. As she crossed the green with his hand in hers, herself habited in a faded red cloak, large black straw bonnet, and mounted on pattens, the old dame experienced a feeling of gratefulness that it had fallen to her lot to minister to the little lad's comfort, and in some humble way, it might be, help to confirm him in a teaching that she saw had been faithfully directed with a view to his eternal state. On the road they overtook one or two other simple bodies, who, like herself, hymn-book in hand, were on their way to the chapel, or meeting-house, as it was indifferently termed, where, in primitive simplicity, the God-fearing labourers and mechanics assembled twice during the week evenings, 'to hear of heaven and learn the way,' and on the Sabbath were found amongst the most regular and attentive of the congregation at the parish church, not the less able to appreciate the beautiful liturgy because they had worshipped in a conventicle, or had listened with greater profit to the less ornate, but to them more intelligible exposition by the unlettered man who, from the neighbouring town, laid aside his apron or his trowel and came to teach, himself divinely taught.

The plain exterior of the small building corresponded to its interior,—a long room with whitewashed walls, the windows on each side closed in by outside shutters to avoid annoyance from scoffers without; a few plank steps in front conducted to the entrance. Within the building a double row of forms was arranged, with an aisle or passage between, on which the congregation sat facing a plain deal desk on a slightly elevated platform. A couple of wooden candlesticks, containing lighted candles, on each side of the conductor of the service, and about half-a-dozen tin dishes hung around the walls, each containing a piece of tallow candle, lit up the room. Perhaps as noticeable a feature as any was the number of children present, accompanying their parents, all, as before intimated, of the artisan and labouring class, thus early training for respectable orderly villagers, by being brought under the restraining influence of religion, instead of receiving the pernicious teachings of the ale-bench. Happy the children thus favoured, and thrice blessed the locality in which, by and by, they will take the places of those who acquitted themselves thus well of their responsibility.

As Nanny and her boy took their seats on the last form, the leader gave out two lines of the hymn, the whole of which he had previously read, a practice which continued throughout the singing, and had its origin in the inability of many to provide themselves with books, but which occasioned no interruption to the continuity of the tune, custom rendering it perfectly easy, even in the singing of an eight-lines hymn, to take up the air after each pause. The heartiness and volume of sound made up for defects in time or harmony. All knelt at prayers, even those who, according to the recognised religious status of this little community, were not members; for, rude as might be their manners, they were too respectful to offend the scruples of the pious by any such outward exhibition of difference or indifference whilst assembled with them in a place which, though consecrated by no apostolic successor, was yet regarded as a place where God's name was recorded, and whose hallowing sanction thereto had been bestowed in a mode that appealed too powerfully to their unreasoning faith to admit of question. The consecration that flowed from apostolic times in their view was of the simple heart, and in that unpretending room many a one had received the Spirit's witness to that fact, changing, in some prominent instances, the lion into the lamb.

During the first prayer the door had been more than once opened and closed by some late comer, and as Willie, disturbed thereby, looked up, his attention was attracted by a figure seated on the form against the wall, near the door, which by the dull candlelight, after one or two furtive glances, he made out to be Mape, who, perceiving he was recognised, grinned and shuffled on his seat. A little nearer the door, and the only other occupants of the same form, were two town boys, who had sneaked in probably at the same time as Harfagr. As the prayer, which at times rose to a high pitch, proceeded, its ejaculatory style, and the strong expressions used, called forth hearty and fervent responses. Presently a giggle, and then a feeble imitation of the Amens in a somewhat ludicrous tone, was heard and repeated until it attracted Mrs. Miller's attention, who raised her head and detected the two town boys in the act. She shook her head and frowned, whereupon the two boys shook their heads and elongated their faces, and then, raising their eyes to the ceiling, placed their hands in an expressive manner upon their breasts. Upon this Nanny took to telegraphing, and, raising her forefinger, shook it in unison with her head, a proceeding that was imitated by the two village

Arabs, but without affecting the old woman, she having once more bowed her head. On rising to sing the next hymn, either from their exposed position, or the soothing effect of the old psalm tune, the boys were quiet; possibly the latter cause, as all, both old and young, engaged therein most vociferously, the lustiness of their enunciation evidencing that, if to the outward ear they were not making melody with their tongues, they undoubtedly were in their hearts, more acceptable to Him whose praise they sang than all the rhapsodies of the best trained choir, or than the most artistically rendered mass at hall or cathedral. Even Harfagr was carried off by the outburst, as his mouth and eyes, opened to their full extent, testified.

Again the earnest worshippers bowed, and again ensued the quick responses to the heartfelt confessions and supplications of the one whose vocal utterance, at the call of their leader, in his turn led their devotions; and again was heard, feebly at first, but louder as more emboldened by their impunity, the groans from the seat by the door, and which once more excited Mrs. Miller to a resumption of her digital telegraphy; but as the one finger was not productive of any better effect than on the former occasion, on the repetition of the groans she shook her fist, accompanying it with a threatening frown at the two boys, as they turned their grinning countenances towards her. The motion given to the form by Nanny's action caused Willie to peep through his fingers to ascertain the reason thereof, when, struck by the attitude of the old woman, he withdrew both hands from his face, deeply impressed by the fervency of her emotions, which he did not remember he had ever seen so strongly manifested at any of the services at which he attended with his Aunt, where, indeed, the service was altogether differently conducted.

By this time the delinquents were beginning to enjoy the fun amazingly, when a new impetus was given them by Mape, who, his head buried in his hands as he knelt at the form, had not observed the actions or conduct of the boys, and so became suddenly impressed with the idea that it was his duty also to re-echo the Amens and groans that rose from the audience, in a similar manner to that pursued by the two town boys, whom he assumed to be frequenters of the place, and therefore understood its usages. Thereupon, on the next essay by the two youths, he followed suite by a very melancholy moan. So very original was it, that it at first startled the other two, but recovering, and putting their heads together for a minute's consultation,

they gradually edged nearer, and, watching the opportunity, just as he was in the act of echoing the groaning of the nearest one, the other reached his hand past him, and performed an operation that acted so potently on Mape, that the intended imitation was changed into an involuntary and irreverent shout of 'Oh! Od rot tha fur a gallus nontkake!' and an immediate rise to his feet, followed by a violent rubbing of the part affected.

As the shout occurred at the wrong time, just as a low-toned brother was praying rather softly, it caused an abrupt termination thereof, and an acceleration to the ordinary movement in rising of the whole congregation, quickly followed by the advance of two or three of the male portion towards the two culprits. Comprehending at once the probabilities, without awaiting any communication that might be intended for their especial benefit, they grasped their hats from under the form, and, with a parting groan, rushed out of the door, slamming it after them. Still rubbing the affected part, Mape looked on with a bewilderment that was not lessened as he found himself in the grasp of two stalwart men, who, after shaking him backwards and forwards, cuffed his ears, and forcibly ejected him from the room, throwing his hat after him. As the door opened for this purpose, the two boys, who were on the outside, started into a run, but, on discovering how matters stood, they returned to make some very kind inquiries relative to the state of Harfagr's feelings, and to suggest that 'ef he wurn't getten' pricked at heaart, he wur somewheer else;' whereupon Mape made a dive at the first speaker, gave him a blow that, being unprepared for, sent him sprawling on the ground, and then made for the other, who, timely warned, took to his heels and went down the road with all speed, pursued by Mape. As, however, the latter was soon distanced, he was compelled to give up the chase and return to the school, where he arrived without having been missed, but by no means encouraged by the issue of his first appearance at prayer-meeting, whither, unseen by Nanny or his young friend, he had followed them.

As this kind of interruption occasionally occurred, the effect was transient, and the tone of the meeting was soon restored. The leader of the services, being also a local preacher, performed the duty of the regular minister, whose extensive circuit only permitted of an occasional visit to this part of his charge. The preparatory exercises having therefore been gone through, he entered into a short exposition of a passage of Scripture, taken

from the fourth chapter of Second Kings, relating to Elisha and the Shunammite woman; a bare outline whereof can only be given here, for the perusal of such as may be sufficiently interested in recalling the style and men to whose godly teaching the poorer class in many of our villages in those days owed their edification.

'We'st larn two things, an' summat moar. We can noa be koind to minister nor ony o' th' Lord's people, bud He gies t' oll back an' moar. This gran' woman wurn't aboon ca'in' in a poor man o' God to tak' summat t' eat, an' t' mak' 'im comfortable at top t' house. There are soam wha'd put all gooid men a-top t' house, oot o' reach, bud t' wurn't so wi' hur, fur she mad 'im a chaamer' (looking at the verse as though a little puzzled) 'on t' wall. Aw doan't quite knaw ah shoo ded 't,—it must ben a fearfu' job; howsomever, shoo ded it. An' shoo wur a gran' woman. Soam folk ur so gran' they'll noa spak to a poar body; bud harken, sisters, this gooid woman sed shoo dwelt amoong hur ain people, an' she wanted nowt. Tho' aw thenk she ded, on'y she'd forgotten. Soam on us are wantin' wun thing, an' soam on us another, though we doan't say so, an' when we're getten 't we'd ben better wi'oot 't. Woll, t' owd propheat gied her a babby, fur thur wur nowt else shoo wanted, and reyt fond on t' shoo wur. Bud nah coom'd th' trouble. Wun day, when hur owd man wur goan t' shearen' in t' fields, t' lad went oot t' see daddy, and then play'd aboot, mebbe wi'oot his cap, an' so he fell sick in t' heead,—loike enow t' wur sun-stroke. An' poar heart-broken muther happed 'im up in her lap, tull he deed. Nah, thur's soam on yees women-fowk as sayin' at's very haard, to gie the gooid woman 'at wur soa koind to God's servant a child, an' then, when shoo's getten soa fond on 't, to tak' 't away agen. 'At's t' owd Sattan 'at's tellen' tha 'at. 'T wurn't haard, 't war th' Lord's child, an' He on'y lent 't. Joab said the Lord gave, an' th' Lord's takken away, an' when 'at happens t' ye ye mun say, "blessed be th' name o' th' Lord." "Noa," tha ses't, "aw can't fashun to say yon." Thur's Widda Jonas' purty prattler,—they ca'd her Jean' (Nanny gave Willie a jog, he having become a little drowsy, and the old lady being desirous that he should listen to what was becoming so interesting to herself),—'at cud nobbud just stand on hur fut, a sweet little feytherless lass 'at widda wur soa proud on,—an' who wudna be? an' wun neet, as t' gooid woman wenut hoam throo chapel, shoo found her wee moppet wur sick, an' 't deed 'fore t' morn, an' tho' it's irver soa long sin,

shoo's noa done fretten' yet,'—Mrs. Miller 'did not wonder, she'd be no mither if she wur;'—'an' o' odd neets shoo pools t' little duds oot o' drawer wun by wun, tull shoo comes to a paper 'at's folded, an' undost 't, an nah shoo's holding up a bit yallow hair to leet, an' luks an luks at 't tull shoo can't see 't, her een's blinded wi' greetin', an' tha'd thenk her heeart 'ud brak,—et's ommost deeath-blow. An' nah shoo ses to 't, "O Jean, lassie, tha'lt nivver coom back t' me!" An' 'at's troo. 'At's what Daavid sed when hes birdie deed; bud tha'lt see 't agen, widda. Et's fur the best et's taken! Et winna coom back, bud you ma' goa to't,—an' wull tha? Tha gavest thi heeart to the child. God wants baith, wants yoo an' t' child; wull ye gie t' 'im,—gie 'im tha heeart? Mebbe ef 't 'ud lived, th' 'ud 'ad trooble an' sorrow, an' nivver getten to heaven yersel'.'

During this portion of the address, Widow Jonas, who was present, accompanied by Mrs. Miller and one or two other bereaved ones, had been moved to tears. But, leaving the female portion to ruminate on this way of putting the case, the preacher turned his attention to the male portion of his hearers, whose conduct he likened to the Shunammite's husband's, who, he seemed to infer from his passiveness throughout the affair, was too much occupied with his shearing or worldly occupation to be profited by the visit of the man of God, and thereupon appealed to them as to the fearful risk that those ran, who, like the rich fool, were only thinking of laying up goods for future years, though, looking at the major part of his congregation, it could scarcely be surmised that any of them were likely to require even one barn to harvest their goods in.

Then, in conclusion, addressing them generally, he wound up thus:

'Ah, bud thear's soom on ye's hard to break down, an' yoo'll tak' a deal o' brayin' afore ye gie in. Ye want soom o' yer own way, bud the reyt way's ower narra fur 'at, tho' et's broad enuff to letten a' the world on 't ef 't 'll goa. 'At's a crucken way 'at wants t' stop an' tak' a child, or husband, or woife wi' us, afore we'll stir oursen. We can tak' 'em along as far as tha'll goa, bud we munna wait while they fettle an' fash. Soam 'll nother goa thersel's nor let others, bud when you're on t' road you munna luk back loike t'owd woife as thowt shoo'd tak' another luk at t' homestead, an' thur shoo's standing nah. Noa, when tha'st shutten doar agen t' world, nivver goa back to peep in agen; an' ef storm uv temptation sets in, tak' a strong grip of t' Saviour's han', or tha'lt be blown off t' road. Soom on ye's been

stannen' looken' in at t' gate a lang day, an' 'ud got in lang sin, on'y yoo won't let goa o' somethin' 'at your holden' on to,—mebbe et's husband, mebbe a young woman or a babby, an' so tha'lt nivver get in. Ye coom an' tak' a luk, an' scratch t' head, an' say yo'll coom back agen the morrow, an' then yu'r aff for a gap in t' hedge to clammer ower. An' when one has gettin' in reyt way, thur's others as 'll try to pool 'em back, bud hold on, an' nawther 'em nor t' owd boy hissel' can doo 't. Goa on, brother; goa on, sister; an' when you've clammered up yonner tha'lt drap noa more tears for Jean nor John, tha'lt see their sweet faces in glory; bud aboon a', tha'lt see Jesus in 'at bootiful land.'

The service, carried on almost from beginning to end, except the hymns, in their own vernacular, was concluded by another hymn and prayer; after which a general hand-shaking took place, and the simple worshippers returned to their humble homes, perhaps as much edified as had they listened to a more logical scholastic discourse.

CHAPTER LIII.

FIGGINS' FLINT FIXED.

"THE Battle and the Breeze"—"The Battle and the Breeze"—avast there, shipmate! we're out of our reck'ning somehow. That's strange, too! I'd a' wagered a trifle with any lubber that I'd a' hauled right alongside old Figgins' slip with my eyes shut. Maybe we've run too high; 'bout ship, and wear a bit.'

This was said by a seafaring man to another, as they halted, looked around them, and then crossed to the other side of Wapping High Street, whence, after a further survey to ascertain their bearings, they re-crossed, and then retraced their steps down the street, their eyes raised to read the sign-boards, until the first speaker called for another halt, and, after helping himself to a quid, expressed his regret at keeping his comrade beating about in that fashion, but informed him that they'd have to go back on the last tack, for he knew it was not down as low as that.

At that moment a lighterman passed, of whom he inquired 'where old Figgins held out?'

'Figgins—Figgins?' replied the man, endeavouring to recall a name not unfamiliar to him.

'Ay,—him as kept the variety shop.'

'Oh, ah! it's up furder a good bit.'

'I thought so.—Come on, Jim, and give me the cage.'

'O no! I reckon it's nothin' to carry.' And thereupon the man addressed passed into his other hand a bell-shaped cage covered over with a red and white spotted handkerchief, and the two began their walk back, until they found themselves once more at the place at which they had first stopped, when they again spelt out the dingy signs a few yards either way, and then looked at each other. The first speaker, a man of about fifty, took off his glazed hat and wiped his brow, and then exclaimed, half laughing, 'Well, I'm beat this time.'

'Maybe you're out o' your latitude, and it's one o' the upper streets,' suggested the other.

'What upper street? There arn't but one Wapping. You're thinking of Upper Thames Street.'

Just then three sailors came rollicking out of a tavern, and laid hands on Jim, and commenced dragging him back with them into the place they had just quitted.

''Vast there—haul off, shipmates! I've stopped his grog,' said the elder; ''vast heaving.'

'You—stopped—his grog;—are you cappen?' hiccupped the farthest gone of the three, as he endeavoured to approach the other, but in which attempt he was unsuccessful, each essay being productive of a retrograde movement as he swayed backward on his heels.

'Say, where's the old "Battle and Breeze"?' said Jim.

'Eh!—don't call me—old Babblebees, or I'll take a reef in your skysail,' returned the same man, making another effort to advance, but which brought him up against the doorway of the tavern, through which he was pushed by his two comrades, who re-entered the place.

'Who are you wanting?' demanded a woman who had been looking out from a window above, and had overheard the inquiry.

'Old Figgins as used to live hereabouts, but is got stowed away somewhere.'

'Lower down. He used to live where the trotter shop is now.'

'Thankee, missus, I thought I'd shot ahead. Bear a hand, mate.' And thereupon the two made their way back until they came to the dealer in pigs' trotters and tripe. Here he learned that Figgins had lived there, but that the sheriff's 'beaks' had got hold of him, and that it had gone hard with the old fellow, and that the neighbours were sorry, as he was a real decent body. But where he had gone or been taken to, the trotterman was unable to inform him.

This the elder sailor pronounced to be unfortunate, and entered into an explanation that he had just arrived from South America, and that he had known Figgins ever since he was no bigger than a marlinspike, and was going to give the parrot in that cage to that pretty little daughter of his, in place of a blind-eyed son of a gun that her father had bought her when he was last here. After a little further conversation, but in which he was unable to learn anything more concerning his old friend's

present whereabouts, the two seamen made their way towards Tower Hill, the elder declaring 'he'd never rest till he'd discovered where them land-sharks had stowed him away, and he had come to his help, as he knew Figgins would have done to his, if he'd been in distress;' and expressed his sorrow that he'd not been in port at the time. At the conclusion of which lament he commenced humming an old refrain, 'I've often met with such a breeze, but never with such a blow,' and with his companion was soon lost amongst the crowd in Whitechapel.

Aided by the good offices of the many friends his genial nature had procured him amongst the law clerks, with whom his duties had brought him continually in contact, it was not long after his dismissal from Mr. Hawkes' service, before Skeggs obtained a situation in the office of the respectable firm of Messrs. Nettle and Barrem of Essex Street, Strand, as junior common law clerk. In this position, both his pay and his duties were much more agreeable to him. The alteration in his pecuniary circumstances had enabled him to make some change in his domestic arrangements, chief amongst which was his removal from his old and out-of-the-way quarters to chambers in Lyon's Inn; no pretence this time, he had gone into veritable chambers in a veritable Inn, although, since such precise language is being used, it ought to be noted that there is a small exaggeration in the term employed, the s, strictly speaking, requiring to be dropped, for Mr. Skeggs only rented a *single* chamber, in common with many others of his limited means, but then this was the usual designation, not only of the whole building, but every compartment or division thereof, as it would have been had it been applied to half a room, but then a small baize partition at one end of the apartment, improvising a bed-room, might, after all, justify the use of the plural designation.

By taking up his quarters in this locality, Mr. Skeggs felicitated himself that there was not only the advantage of living in a snug place, compatible with his retiring habits and increased respectability, but it was also near his friend Grumphy, whose excuse for not visiting him oftener had hitherto been the distance, but now could be able to run in for an hour at any time of an evening, as he assured him he would always find him at home; though this ought to have been said with a saving clause, there being certain exceptional occasions, but in reference to these he thought he could justify himself to any confidential friend, by giving a satisfactory reason therefor, and therefore did not con-

sider it in any way militated against the correctness of his assertion or his character for domesticity. However, as Mr. Grumphy rarely visited Mr. Skeggs unless specially invited, this exceptional meaning occasioned the former no disappointment or inconvenience, and to none other was the same *carte blanche* extended. The first week or two, attracted probably by the novelty of Skeggs' new habitat, or curiosity to become acquainted with its peculiarities, the latter did succeed once or twice in persuading the assistant to spend an evening at his snuggery. But then, on those occasions, by way of making sure of him, he called at the surgery at the time of closing, and thus securing him, in imitation of a great man of the former century, as he took his arm, first invited him to take a walk in Fleet Street, after which, on his return, and before entering the Inn, they took a turn or two through Holywell Street, where he drew his friend's attention to its archæological features, and spoke in terms of admiration of the skill displayed by the artists of other days, as evidenced in the portrait, now begrimed with soot and dirt, painted on a signboard, and designated the 'Indian Queen,' of whom it was said to be a striking likeness as she appeared when residing in the palatial dwelling from which it was suspended; only rivalled by the exquisitely carved and gilded 'Crescent Moon' at a short distance, the profile projecting in the centre whereof was said to be an accurate conception of the features of the historic man inhabiting that luminary. Tradition, however, rather varied in regard to these, as well as some other relics of antiquity, as the two referred to were said by some to have once designated the marts of two rival mercers.

As they proceeded, Mr. Grumphy positively declined to stop and look into the staymakers' windows to observe the model busts that were so attractive to Skeggs as well as the other sex, but tarried a few minutes at the open window of the second-hand bookseller's, the projecting shelf from which was filled with books, whose black-letter types and cloudy plates bore testimony to the state of the typographic art in the days of the aforesaid Indian Queen. As it was difficult to get by the old clothes shops, whose owners persisted in impeding their progress whilst they expatiated on the beauty and adaptiveness to their size and wants of sundry garments hanging over windows and doors, Mr. Skeggs constrained his friend to cross to the opposite side of the street, and contemplate the two immense masks on either side the door-posts of a shop that abounded in ancient articles of rare

vertu, such as gilded scabbards, ivory-handled scimitars, gold-laced and spangled garments, cocked hats, and an endless variety of women's satin, velvet, and muslin ware, and minor trinkets, all dating from the same remote age as the 'Crescent Moon' and 'Indian Queen,' and which, Mr. Skeggs informed Mr. Grumphy, had in those days been worn by the maskers and mummers of the neighbouring Inn, as well as of others, and whose revelries, although suspended during the Puritan days of the Protectorate, were revived on the accession of the Merry Monarch; but as such relation took some time to get through, it was brought to an abrupt termination by the proprietor of the said establishment crossing the road to inform them that he was prepared to fit them out in any character for the masquerade that evening, which occasioned the two gentlemen to move on, and afforded Mr. Skeggs the opportunity of dilating on other proofs of the long-ago times with which, from one end to the other, the narrow lane and its ill-savoured contents seemed to be identified.

But if Mr. Skeggs was enchanted with the suggestive associations of Holywell Street, he was much more so by those of his place of residence. It was his custom, when returning from his office, to enter the long narrow passage leading from the Strand into the aforesaid street, and cross to the archway on the opposite side. A pair of boldly-carved lions' heads symbolized the name of the Inn, to which the archway was the entrance. With these Octavius soon became on quite familiar terms, a hasty look of recognition and a responsive smile at their grinning features seeming to imply as much.

A venerable memorial of other days was this old Lyon's Inn, investing its occupants with the *prestige* of its own historic fame. Originally a hostelry with a lion for its sign, it subsequently became the dwelling-place or seat of legal and philosophic erudition, which, in passing, we would observe may have been an additional incentive to Mr. Skeggs in fixing upon it as his place of abode. In the south-west corner was the old brick louvred hall, bearing on its elevation the distinctive lion, wherein, during the Elizabethan era, the learned Sir Edward Coke, who also resided in the Inn, expounded law to crowded audiences, a no very easy task at a period when law was almost inexpoundable, having become so contradictory and complicated, that 'any law or statute to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding' could be pleaded in bar to any other statute or even common

law, and when almost every functionary invested with any sort of judicial or executive authority was 'a law unto himself.'

Reluctant to yield its ancient glory, handed down from generation to generation through men of forensic ability, histrionic fame, or antiquarian lore, or even the poor scholar (poor only in pocket), who had clung tenaciously to the venerable chambers, it had continued to afford an almost cloistered retreat to genius, until, gradually and with solitary exceptions, they had been superseded by editors of magazines, compilers of post office directories, army and navy agents, architects, and commissioners of insolvent debtor courts, and others *sui generis*, though still under the ægis of the old porter, a last link between the ages.

Mr. Skeggs' altered circumstances were also perceptible in his personal appearance as well as manners, to which latter was imparted an air of confidence not apparent in former days. His shirt collar, no longer shrinking into his neckcloth, most stiffly starched, boldly forced itself under his auricles, much to their discomfort, whilst his shabby worn stock was exchanged for a fine black silk neckerchief, stiffened with a cambric wire pad, and tied in front with a large bow with flaunting ends. A large nova mina stone set in silver, fastened between the broad frills of his dickey, that protruded beyond a rose flowered satin waistcoat, set off his frontal. He had also treated himself to what was said to be a snuff-coloured frock coat, which, according to the fashion, should have buttoned tightly at the waist, but which it did not, either because Mr. Skeggs' waist was too bulky, or the coat's too small, probably the latter, seeing it was the nearest fit Mr. Solomons, the proprietor of the Holywell Street establishment at which it was purchased, had in his shop, and which, strange to say, though Skeggs could never thereafter accomplish the same feat, at the time it was tried on, that ingenious salesman did succeed in buttoning, though, from the effect on the button and button-hole, he thought it best to immediately let go again. This would have caused a demurrer on the part of the customer, but that the aforesaid Solomons, after sleeking it down with his hand before and behind, and retreating a few paces, first to this angle and then to that, to detect, if possible, any defect, was completely enraptured, and declared it the best fit that had ever gone out of his emporium, and must have belonged to Count D'Orsay or Beau Brummel, the leaders of the fashion in those days, for of course the garment had been worn before, perhaps once or twice, but there again Mr. Solomons assured him, with respect to that, 'it wash better ash new,—new ones always

faded; no fear of that changing colour,—impossible! if it did he'd take it back.' He was safe there: if any such change ensued, it would have improved its appearance, in which case it is to be presumed Mr. Skeggs would have held on to it. Trousers, also selected from Mr. Solomons' ready-made stock (the whole suit only being intended for week-day wear, a bran-new suit for Sunday having been made by a tailor), tight at the knee and widening in their descent, were strapped over his bluchers. One drawback to this fashion, that looked quite splash when standing or walking, was, as previously noted, that when seated it necessitated the extension of Mr. Skeggs' legs to a very obtuse angle, and their maintenance in a very rigid position. A bell-crowned hat, with a Wellington shaped brim, completed his outfit, and rendered him a model for his brother professionals congregating at judges' chambers, as well as a subject for a glance out of the corners of the blue and black eyes, under every variety of bonnet, passing along Chancery Lane, through Lincoln's Inn, or other such legal precincts, about which, during the greater portion of term times, gentlemen of Mr. Skeggs' calling might be seen rushing along, appearing and disappearing at doorways in lively succession.

Before proceeding to unravel the circumstances that led to the sailor's embarrassment in his search for the variety shop, known as 'The Battle and the Breeze,' it was needful to enter into the foregoing particulars respecting Mr. Hawkes' late clerk. Having done this, we now return to take up the clue that will explain the occasion of the disappearance of that well-known place of business. Soon after Skeggs' dismissal, when the trio had recovered from the temporary alarm occasioned by his little antagonism, the attorney had vigorously followed up the impending suit against Figgins, with the full intent of consigning his refractory client to the Marshalsea, or other safe place of keeping, where he would be likely to remain in blissful ignorance of the world without, and effectually prevented interfering with the action of his clients in the Trelawney affairs. Octavius' disruption with Hawkes had quite reconciled Figgins to the former, the more particularly when he learned that it was the result of his loyalty to himself, proof positive that there had been no collusion between the lawyer and his clerk, although the latter (his fidelity to his employer rendering such imperative) had permitted him to remain in ignorance of the real state of his suit. Taken, therefore, into his confidence, Mr. Skeggs became his legal adviser, though not ostensibly appearing as such, not being qualified to act in that capacity. Nevertheless,

by his counsel and directions, the attorney's cause was impeded and delayed at every step, Mr. Skeggs not hesitating to resort to those devices taught him by that worthy, and against whom he felt himself justified in making his own moves, whereby he might possibly checkmate him; but if nothing beyond delay was to be gained, and though it would increase the costs, the satisfaction of playing off his own precedents against his former employer was something that was too enjoyable to forego. Besides, his heart sank at the thought of Figgins being incarcerated, knowing the consequences to the family, and therefore he sought, by procrastination, to avoid that painful issue as long as practicable; but when this could no longer be done, by his advice Mr. Figgins invited his legitimate creditors to satisfy themselves, after which the small balance that remained was handed to his wife for present exigencies, and the defence ceasing, judgment went by default. There was now no alternative but for Mr. Figgins to take up his abode in the King's Bench, whither, amid the lamentations of wife and family, he was taken. It was the first real trouble that had invaded their house, or disturbed their peaceful lives. But experience is estimated by its cost, and, though paying dear for it, if left nothing else, they were left that,—the experience that it is not always wise to require one's own, at least at the hand of justice, too inflexible to permit the removal of the traditional bandage that law and precedent have doubly folded over her eyes, thereby affording a continued assurance of her constant blindness, and that law and precedency would not permit it to be otherwise.

In order to be near the incarcerated husband and father, the family, in common with many others similarly situated, had hired rooms in the neighbourhood of the prison, where they endeavoured to support themselves by the precarious employment of sewing, washing, mangling, and even lace-work, at which latter Miss Figgins was proficient. Their arrival created no commotion and awakened no curiosity. One common bond united all, whether up-stairs in the garret or down in the basement, there were the same aching hearts, all partaking, despite these varied antecedents, the same settled look, alternating between melancholy and despair; each nursed an invisible vampire that was feeding not the less effectually because impalpable. Caged within those high blank walls for the crime of owing, and, it might be, for not owing, at least justly, and ruthlessly torn from all companionship of loved ones, many an unfortunate pined away his days; whilst, only less imprisoned because voluntarily so,

those loved ones congregated in the streets around, refusing to be separated farther than iron gates or massive wooden doors compelled, and lived or starved within the shortest possible range of that pitiless building. The degree of privation or suffering induced corresponded to the ability to struggle out of the depression that dominated all; but whilst a few, brought to so unexpected a condition, became aware for the first time of the strong will that had been dormant within, and heroically burst through the accretion that had encased it, wanting the incentive for its manifestation, there were others who, trained to self-indulgence, stunned by the absence of the bread-winner, sank down helpless and hopeless, and were distinguishable by the abjectness of their despondency.

Although Mr. Skeggs could be of no further assistance professionally, having done all in that line that he was able, up to the time that Mr. Figgins was taken charge of by virtue of the capias issued under the sign-manual of one Tenterden, Lord Chief Justice, etc., there was no bar to his assisting that gentleman to while away his time, during his retirement to the splendid mansion provided for his occupation by an indulgent country, as often as he could afford the time, and the rules of the establishment would permit; and which in part accounts for the occasional exceptions to his being always found at home, as intimated on his general invitation to Mr. Grumphy, but not wholly, as he not unfrequently made a slight detour that brought him into the street, and eventually into the lodgings of Mrs. Figgins, and finally into the presence of Miss Figgins herself.

It was on one such occasion, when Mr. Skeggs' official duty in that direction permitted of an earlier call at the said lodgings, than usual, that he found himself by the side of the one to whom, if possible, his heart beat truer in her hour of trial than even when surrounded by the comforts of a cosy home.

'Well, sweetheart,' said Octavius, patting her cheek, and endeavouring by little artifices to draw her into a conversation, as she sat at the window of their scantily furnished apartment, plying her needle at a piece of lace-work from which, except on his entrance, she had not raised her eyes, 'why don't you talk?' Then, lowering his head to get a glimpse of her face, as she partially raised hers, he became sensible of a tear still detained between her lashes, but that, on this movement, trickled on to her face, and was hurriedly brushed off.

Octavius sat silent for a few minutes, watching the motion of her hands as she continued her work, and during which he became so absorbed in his own reflections, that Tom, who had purred around his legs, and risen several times on his hind feet to rub his big head against his old friend's knees, had to retire to one of the children's dresses in the corner of the room, on which he had been sleeping, without the coveted recognition. Gradually Mr. Skeggs awoke from his reverie, and drew his seat nearer to the sorrowful girl, and then, passing his arm around her waist, whispered, 'Bella dear, is there anything ails you? are you not well? tell me what's the matter, love.'

Mr. Skeggs' movement had caused the needle to become unthreaded, whereupon she was about to occupy herself in trying to rectify the mishap, but owing, perchance, to the sympathetic tone and action of that person, her eyes once more filled, and, throwing aside her work, she burst into tears, and buried her face in her hands.

'What *is* the matter?' exclaimed the distressed Skeggs, as he drew her head to his shoulder. But instantly withdrawing it, and wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, she replied:

'Oh, nothing, nothing!—I'm only a poor, weak, silly thing.'

'No, you're not,' returned Skeggs, imprinting a kiss on her cheek; 'and you don't cry for nothing. What is it, Arabella?'

'Oh, never mind, it's all right now;' and, wiping her face again, she took up her work, but which he gently took out of her hands, and said,

'Bella, it's not right to hide from me whatever it may be that's distressing you, so you'll tell me, like a good girl. Where have you been, or what have you been doing to-day?'

Miss Figgins raised her eyes to her lover, and, regarding him with a painful expression, she replied, 'Oh, Octavius, I was at that horrid place to-day, to see my dear old father.' She stopped, her throat choked up, and her eyes again filled.

'It's too much for you, Bell; you shouldn't go.'

'Not go to see my dear old daddy! I wish I could live there all the time and take care of him; but he's changing so,—I see it every time I go,—he is getting paler and thinner; and I'm afraid, if he stays there, he'll never come out again.' Miss Figgins was not uttering an unintentional bull; had the idea she was about to express not occasioned a fresh emotion, that she struggled to overcome, she would have completed her sentence by adding the word 'alive,' but the thought was too dreadful to contemplate,

and, shaking off the feeling occasioned thereby, she continued, 'Tavy, he wants air and exercise, and something more.'

'Does he complain, Bella?'

'He complain! dear old soul, he'd never complain to *me;* he tries to make me think he doesn't mind it. But when I sat on his dear old knee, and threw my arms round his neck,—oh, Octavius, I felt, for I could not look at him, the hot tears falling on my neck, and father never cried before.' The tears were starting again to her own eyes, as she continued: 'And as he pressed me to his heart, he said, what I know he didn't mean me to understand, "What'll become of 'em? what'll become of 'em?" Arabella sobbed as she repeated the last words, whilst Skeggs found it necessary to cough, and commence a search for his handkerchief. Recovering somewhat after a brief pause, she resumed, 'Oh, Octavius, is there nothing can be done for him? Can't you do anything—won't you?' and then, as a fresh thought struck her, she drew herself up, and exclaimed half reproachfully, 'Why didn't you?—why did you let him go there, Octavius?'

'*Me!*' rejoined Skeggs, surprised at a demand that implied that he could have prevented it. 'What do you mean, Bella?' and thereupon he protested against any such assumption, and proceeded to explain, in as plain a way as the technical nature of a law-suit would permit, the several stages at which, by his counter-action, he had employed all the skill of which he was master to frustrate or delay the final catastrophe. At the conclusion whereof she expressed her regret at entertaining an idea that nothing but the keenness of her grief would have caused her so unguardedly to utter, especially when she recalled the circumstance that his interest in her father's cause had been exhibited at the expense of his own. A kiss, impressed with the greater warmth for this transient interruption, banished the little feeling occasioned thereby, and had just restored Mr. Skeggs to the increased felicity usually the sequence of such little misunderstandings, when it was again rudely disturbed by her asking, with great seriousness,

'Octavius, couldn't I do something to be sent to the same place as pa?'

'You! do something!' exclaimed Skeggs with surprise. 'What do you want to do?'

'Something—anything that would make them take me too, and shut me up there in that dismal place, where I could stay and take care of my dear old father.'

'O yes, to be sure you could,' replied Skeggs, unable to restrain a laugh at the strange conceit; 'just you get over head and ears in debt, that's all, and we'll soon get you in. Ha! ha! what a pretty prisoner you'd be!—why, you'd turn the heads of the whole kit, keeper and all. But what would I do? Well, I'd have to capias myself. No, I wouldn't, I'd 'plevy on you, cos you belong to somebody else already.'

'Does everybody that gets into debt go there?' pursued Miss Figgins, without noticing her lover's pleasantry, other than by a faint smile.

'Well, not exactly, or it would be pretty full. No, there's plenty of prisons besides that.'

'Are there?' responded Miss Figgins, somewhat disconcerted at the information, and fearful that, in that case, there might be some difficulty in getting into the same place with her father. 'I should think that was big enough for everybody.' Then, in a constrained and hesitating manner, as Skeggs took her hand in his and pressed it, she said, 'Octavius, may be it is not right, and ma would be angry if she knew I said anything to you about it'— She stopped, and her lover became uneasy, under the impression that she was contemplating some new unpleasantry; whilst this allusion to her mother recalled to his mind the fact that all this time she had been absent, and thereupon he inquired where she was, and if anything ailed her. After a moment or two, during which she struggled for the mastery of herself, she raised her eyes to his, and said in a pleading tone, 'Octavius, don't be angry at what I am going to say.'

'I angry! don't say that, Bella,' interposed Skeggs.

'Stop, hear me out;' and, drooping her eyes, she took up her work and straightened it mechanically on her lap, and as she did so, continued, with more command than might have seemed possible whilst making such a proposition, 'I was going to say,'—her voice had nearly faltered, but a cough or two restored it,—'hadn't you better think no more about me? You needn't mind; I'll not think hard of you. You'll soon find somebody else that will make you happier, and will be more worthy of you than—than'—another cough and a slight movement before she could get the word 'I' out. 'You've had nothing but sorrow lately through us. It's no longer the happy home it was when first you knew me, and never will be again;—and—and'—but the poor disheartened girl had over-estimated her strength, and was unable, as she had argued herself into the belief she could before his

arrival, calmly to lay their bleak prospects before him, and so she broke down at the commencement, and, leaning her arms and head upon the table, burst into hysterical sobs, before Skeggs could recover from his dismay.

'Arabella, darling, what do you mean? are you going to make me distracted this evening?' With a gentle force he raised her head and placed it on his shoulder, whilst he leaned his cheek against hers, and then went on passionately to assure her 'that change of circumstances had neither made any change in his affection towards her, nor ever could.'

'But, Octavius,' exclaimed the stricken girl, as she raised her head, and once more endeavoured to control her feelings, 'we are poor, extremely poor, whilst you are becoming better off, and could do so much better. Yes, I can't hide it from you; I would if only myself was concerned, but it concerns those dear to me, and you can't help knowing it. Ma's gone out to look for another room, for we can't stay here; the landlord, who lives in the basement, says we must go, for we owe two weeks' rent, and he can let it to others; and Jake, poor boy, has been trying to get an errand-boy's place, but hasn't succeeded yet. I'm going to try and learn millinery; but then what's to become of poor dear father, shut up all that time in prison, none of us time to go near him? And then'—she hesitated—'we have not broken our fast to-day,—that is, mother and—well, one of the lodgers was very kind to the children. Oh, isn't it dreadful, Octavius?' and with a desperate effort she checked her rising emotion.

During this sad relation, Mr. Skeggs was the subject of alternate emotions,—compassion, indignation, and grief. And yet what he was thus moved by was only a single instance of what, in the course of his professional duty, he was frequently and necessarily an agent in occasioning to others, without causing him a pang. For once at least he was brought to experience, in its nearer appeal, something of the desolation and misery consequent on a lawyer's faithfulness to his client. Once more he endeavoured to calm the troubled girl by protestations of a fidelity that neither affluence nor poverty could affect, and insisted upon her never again recurring to so painful a theme, concluding by portraying, with much sincerity and hope, the probabilities of a brighter future. But thus made aware of what would not otherwise have occurred to him, he instantly set about alleviating the present want.

For a minute or two he paced the room, holding an animated discussion with himself. 'Had nothing to-day!—and I living like

the Emperor of Turkey, like the Nobody of the Inges.' Then, turning to the table, he brought his fist slowly down on the top, and exclaimed, stopping between each word, 'Skeggs,—you're—a—brute.'

Miss Figgins looked up through her moistened eyes, and said, 'Not you, dear.'

'Yes, I say deliberately, and with malice prepense, I am a brute. Why, here am I, and I dined to-day at the alley-mode beef shop near Holywell Street, and a good dinner it was too,—plenty of sauce and pickles. Araby dear, excuse me, I'll be back directly.' Whereupon Mr. Skeggs darted out of the room, but came back the next minute for his hat, and then ran down the stairs and out of the front door, very nearly falling over the two little Figginses seated on the door-step, who called after him until he turned into Surrey Street, whither he hurried as fast as his legs would carry him. It was not long before he was rounding the corner of the street on his return, his hands full, and followed by a boy carrying a basket, whose movements were accelerated beyond his ordinary speed in his endeavour to keep pace with him. As he passed between the two children, still on the step, he dropped a bun into each of their laps, and, entering the room, commenced a search for the table-cloth, but in which he was unsuccessful, that article having been exchanged for a pawnbroker's ticket; but, coming upon a couple of towels, he substituted them for the occasion.

'Now then, where's the knives and forks, and cups and saucers?' Hastening to a small cupboard, he quickly mustered all that were there, and then opened the paper parcels that he had laid on the table, after emptying his hands and pockets, and which contained sugar and tea and a loaf of bread, and took out of the basket a paper of butter and another of ham and beef. As the two children had by this time made their appearance in the room, he despatched one with a jug for boiling water from a lodger, whilst the other ran off for some milk, over the way. Having done all this, Mr. Skeggs took a survey of the appearance of things, and terminated his inspection by a rearrangement of the table; at the conclusion whereof, in unconscious imitation of his friend Grumphy, he flapped his sides, indicative of his satisfaction therewith, and then turned to Arabella, who, looking on in bewilderment, was smiling through her tears, unable to give expression to her full heart, but which, on her now endeavouring to do, she was prevented by Octavius stepping to her side and

imprinting on her lips a hearty kiss, that he threatened to repeat if she dared to utter another word. Suddenly he became possessed of another thought, and, leaving his hat on the chair, disappeared from the apartment, but was soon back, and whispered to Arabella that it was all right about the rent, and that she was to set to and have a good cup of tea ready for 'the missus' when she returned, and be sure and make a good meal herself. Thereupon he bade her good-bye, after his usual mode of leave-taking, and hurried off, but had not got to the foot of the stairs before he came rushing back for his hat, and joined the children in a hearty laugh at his forgetfulness. Again he was on the landing, about to descend, when he put his head inside the door, and intimated that he had forgotten to say that Mrs. Figgins was not to be told who had done all this. But on Miss Figgins remonstrating against this prohibition, and informing him that her mamma would be alarmed lest she had been incurring more debt, he thought for a moment, then tried to suggest something, but, not being proficient in the art of invention, could not get further than 'Say—say'—when all at once one of the excellent theories of his former governor occurred to him, and he exclaimed, 'Providence sent it,' and shut the door; but as he did so he thought he had scarcely been explicit enough, so, once more opening it, he added laughingly, 'By an angel.' You were not far wrong, Octavius, though doubtless you hardly comprehended the full meaning of your suggestion, and would never have thought of applying the words to yourself.

As he hastened home, under the excitement of the scene he had just passed through, and experiencing the blessedness of them that do good, everything appeared to wear a different aspect to what it did on his way to the Figginses. More than once he stopped to slip a halfpenny into a little fist whose owner was wistfully taking stock of the contents of a pastry-cook's window, or to drop a similar coin into the hat of an itinerating blind musician; and it was not until he was seated in his own room, and for the twentieth time reviewing the late occurrence, that a thought of the paternal Figgins interposed itself. Mr. Skeggs became somewhat sobered as he reflected on the unfortunate position of that individual, and he was soon hard at work devising schemes whereby he might be liberated, each of which, however, in the sequel appeared impracticable, and had therefore, for the present, to be abandoned.

CHAPTER LIV.

SKEGGS TO THE RESCUE.

IT is not unusual, after a larger draught upon our emotional nature than ordinary has been made, to experience a gradual or even sudden reaction, and this the more readily when any concurrent cause of repression exists, that may at any moment force itself upon our consideration, and, from its importance, refuse to be dismissed from our mind. It was not, therefore, strange that the closing reflections of the evening had so operated on Mr. Skeggs, that on waking in the morning they still retained their influence, and occasioned a considerable abatement of the exhilaration consequent on his action in the matter of the commissariat of the Figgins family. A calm review of the state of the case brought too perceptibly to his cognisance the serious position in which not only the family was placed, but in which he himself stood in regard to the members thereof.

As the depression consequent on these reflections could not be left behind at his chambers, or put off as he entered his office, it soon attracted the notice of his fellow-clerks, the more especially as, from his ordinary flow of spirits, he was in the habit of keeping them in a merry mood. Accordingly they fell to 'chaffing' him upon his unusual sedateness, assigning all manner of causes therefor, until, finally, they hit upon the one deemed the most likely to produce such an effect. 'A disappointment in love, no doubt of it. Did they not all hear him sighing? and see him, when he thought no one was looking, pull the locket out of his waistcoat pocket? Gone case—poor Skeggs, all up with him!' and then followed a profusion of sympathetic and consolatory counsels. The senior common law clerk advised him to keep away from Waterloo Bridge till the week after next, as they were too busy just then to spare time to drag the Thames in search of his body; which the copying clerk thought

a very good idea, as by that time he'd wager pretty Jane would relent, and then they'd be saved the trouble. But against any such cold, calculating policy the sentimental book-keeper protested, and affirmed it as his conviction that no true lover could act so deliberately, and therefore offered to subscribe towards a dose of arsenic, to be taken on Skeggs' return to his lodgings that very evening; and if that didn't affect the hard-hearted jilt, well, it would himself. To this proposition, however, the phlegmatic Chancery clerk, who was never known to exceed a melancholy smile, demurred, avowing that he'd never break his heart nor die for the prettiest girl alive, and therefore suggested that the dose should be administered to Miss Nellie Dee herself. This apparently accidental utterance of the young lady's name, implying that the said Chancery clerk had been taken into Mr. Skeggs' confidence, immediately called forth a fresh amount of banter, each making his comment upon the name, and plying the supposed discarded lover with very pertinent inquiries as to the colour of Nellie's eyes, the shape of her nose, and whether the dimples were deep when she put her lips into small plaits, but eliciting a very marked disapproval, when they extorted from the said Chancery clerk the information that she had red hair, a circumstance that the copying clerk avowed at once accounted for her fickleness.

Mr. Skeggs parried all these thrusts as dexterously as he was able, without losing his temper, and even joined in the laugh at his own expense, especially when, on a subsequent part of the day, composed during his temporary absence, he found the following lines inscribed on his blotting-pad, being the effusion of the book-keeper, who from his prolific genius in that direction had been installed poet-laureate of the establishment, and in virtue thereof was expected to improvise odes and idylls on all special occasions; which the present was pronounced to be, since it had so important a bearing on the fortunes of a brother clerk :—

'To Miss Ellen Dee.

'When again shall I C
U my sweet L N D?
Once the kindest and loveliest of N E.
Then the N v'd of all
We danced at the ball,
But now of T-a-v the N M E.

'Ah! how oft in the shade
Of the I V, sweet maid,
N-rapturing bliss! thy form I'd N twine,
2 my arms U then flew,
Now, alas, we R 2;
And sweet L N D no longer is mine.'

Mr. Skeggs could read no more; the bare contemplation of such an event, apart from the low opinion he entertained of the doggerel lines, which he pronounced unworthy the occasion, caused him to tear off the obnoxious sheet, and, crumpling it up, commit it to the flames, despite the appeals of the whole room, who urged him to make a copy thereof and enclose it to the cruel Ellen, on whom there was no doubt it would operate as effectively as a 'writ of *attachment*,' and melt her obdurate heart much more effectually.

Somewhat restored to his normal state by these sallies, and which he promised to repay in kind, he returned to his chambers in better trim than when he left them in the morning, and had just concluded his evening meal, during which a new idea had occurred to him in reference to Figgins, and which appeared to be attended with an extra elation of spirits, when the housekeeper knocked at his door and announced Mr. Grumphy.

'Ulloa, old chap! glad to see ye! Just the boy I was wanting to see! Take a seat. Where 've ye been hiding all this time?' exclaimed Skeggs, as he jumped up from his chair to welcome his visitor, but, as he shook him by the hand, stopping short and regarding him with a look that meant something.

'Hiding?—nowhere,' growled Mr. Grumphy, averting his face.

Skeggs shook his head, still regarding him with the same suspicious look.

'What's a matter?' retorted the assistant, as he threw himself sulkily into the proffered chair.

'Real sorry, old fellow; known you a long time, and always considered you my best friend.'

'None o' your stuff now.'

Skeggs still shook his head; then raised his hand a short distance in front of his face, his fingers and thumb bent as though holding the stem of a wine-glass, through which, with one eye closed, he appeared to be examining the liquid therein, after which, bringing it to his mouth, he imitated the process of swallowing, concluding by smacking his lips, and exclaiming,

'Good lush, but bites like an adder,—ah, Grumphy! bites like an adder. Eh, old fellow?'

Grumphy scowled, and muttered, 'Keep your jokes to yourself.'

'It wasn't so once, Grumphy. I'm real sorry,—truly I am.'

'You're a fool!' exclaimed the assistant, getting cross.

'Well, take a fool's advice for once, old fellow, and'—

'See here, if I've any more of that, I'll go;' and thereupon he made an effort to rise.

'No, you don't; you've come to spend the evening with me, and now I've got you I mean to keep you. Take a smoke, Grumphy?'

'Yes,' ejaculated the surly man, somewhat appeased by Skeggs' friendly manner, and who was following up his remarks by laying a couple of pipes and a paper of the weed on the table, and placing a spittoon between them.

'Glass of porter?' said Skeggs, as he set a pitcher containing that beverage on the table, with a couple of glasses.

'Oh, hang that! Brandy—hot.'

'Got none in the house.'

'Send for some.'

'No, 'pon honour, can't afford it; I'm hard up.'

Mr. Grumphy grumbled out something querying the correctness of this excuse, and insinuated that he was getting mean, but as his host took no notice thereof, but proceeded to pour out the beer into the glasses at such a height as to occasion a good frothy head thereto, he quieted down, and, tossing off the liquid at one draught, thereby necessitated its being refilled before Mr. Skeggs seated himself; but, having done which, the two filled their pipes and commenced operations.

In explanation of Mr. Skeggs' curt mode of welcoming his friend, towards whom he really felt as much attached as ever, notwithstanding the other had ceased of late to manifest any particular desire for his company, it must be admitted he had too good reasons for his innuendoes. In fact, and to which his appearance bore evidence, Mr. Grumphy's habits of life were becoming rather loose,—indeed, with a rapidity that sadly evidenced how completely he had surrendered himself to the baleful influence, he had become a slave to alcohol, whose stimulating properties were becoming a necessity to his morbid organism, and as a consequence, as Skeggs had painful evidence of, and had hinted to him, 'unless at once checked, he would soon go to the dogs.'

'Busy, Grumphy?' said Mr. Skeggs, who, having sat a few minutes in a contemplative mood, puffing in concert with his guest, had recurred in thought to the 'new idea' that the other's arrival had interrupted, though unexpectedly afforded the opportunity of initiating at once, if he could only do so judiciously, and which he was now about to attempt.

Mr. Grumphy drew a long whiff, looked vacantly at Skeggs, and nodded.

'Busy as a bee in a flower-garden, eh? as old Figgins would say.'

Mr. Grumphy went on puffing and blowing, and then, without withdrawing the pipe from his mouth, muttered, 'Figgins still in quod?'

'Yes,—wish I knew how to get him out.'

'If lawyers can't, who can?' responded the assistant, as he turned to the table to refill his glass from the jug.

'Do you 'member that night that you and the poor old fellow spent with me, when I lived at the East End? They were happy days those, Grumphy.' Mr. Skeggs sighed, and joined the other in replenishing his tumbler.

Mr. Grumphy withdrew his pipe, thought for a second or two, and then remarked, 'Yes, that minds me, he never finished his story, nor told how he came to know the schoolmaster.'

'More he did. I remember, now you mention it.'

'But you're as bad. I asked you more than once who Trelawney was.'

'Trelawney—Trelawney,' responded Skeggs, knocking the top ashes out of his pipe, and then pulling at it two or three times before continuing, 'Trelawney! What do you want to know that for?'

'Don't want to know now!'

'Why?'

'Because I know.'

'Do you? that's odd. Who is he?'

'Why, isn't he studying with us, going on this six months and more.'

'Oh, ah! that young man I've heard you speak of. Yes, by the by, so he is; that's what d'ye call him?' Mr. Skeggs closed his eyes as though endeavouring to recall the name.

'Frendzburgh,' grunted Mr. Grumphy.

'Yes, yes! Frendzburgh,' chimed in Octavius,—'Frendzburgh Trelawney.'

The conversation was taking the turn Skeggs desired. 'Where, by the by, did he come from?—school, wasn't it?—but what school?'

'Where they sent the young un to,' responded the assistant, and then resumed his pipe with a rapidity that showed the last thought had disturbed him.

'What, little Will! Did he go to the same school?' Well now, isn't that strange? and you never told me that before. You are a queer case. Of course he's told you all about him. What's he say?—how odd things do turn out! It's quite a coincidence, as our poet-laureate at the office would say. How I would like to get talking with him, to hear all about the little fellow; I wonder if I couldn't see him?'

During Mr. Skeggs' remarks the assistant had become too sensibly affected by his own remembrance of the subject alluded to, to be able to make any reply, or to notice his friend's hint—for such it was intended for—at obtaining an interview through his intervention.

Finding his guest took no notice thereof, he said in a careless way, 'Grumphy, I'd like to hear about little Willie amazingly. Do you think that chap would come round some night? Think you could manage it?'

'No. Scarr's got very particular lately, and won't let him out of his sight.'

'Not with you? And is it only lately he's got particular? What's the reason of that?'

'None of your cross-questioning, I'm not in a witness-box. You've nothing to do with him, nor the boy, if that's what you want.'

As Mr. Grumphy was not to be moved, especially as he treated the matter as of no importance to Skeggs, the latter unguardedly, in his anxiety to accomplish his purpose, soon made his more astute friend aware that the reason assigned for the interview was not the ostensible one, and thereupon he challenged him in his abrupt way with the fact, and demanded to know what he wanted with him.

In a mysterious tone Skeggs drew his chair nearer, and whispered, 'Grump, old chum, mind mum's the word, but there's a distant future, not very far off, opening upon my unlimited vision.' Mr. Skeggs gazed into the farther corner of the room.

'Where?' exclaimed the assistant, not prepared for so figurative a mode of expression from his host.

'I can't tell you just now,' withdrawing his gaze. 'You'll know by and by. But what time can he come round?'

'No time. You can't see him. I'll take your message.'

'Grumphy, I must see him myself.'

'Eh! must!—that's a strong word—rather too strong.'

'Well, you'll give him a note from me?'

'No.'

'You're an ugly, disobliging chap, that's all I can say.'

Mr. Grumphy made no response, and the two resumed their pipes, both silently pursuing their own thoughts, until Skeggs stopped short, and, with a wink, which he repeated, exclaimed, 'I'll get hold of him, Brian.'

'Will you? we'll see.'

'Are you in earnest, Grumphy?'

'I am.'

'You're precious fond of old Sawbones, when you'd rather please him than do a friend a good turn.'

'Fond of him! fond of him!' Mr. Grumphy ground his teeth, and clenched his fist and struck it on his knee. 'Yes, very fond of him; but I'm not a fool. So I warn you, Skeggs, don't go any farther in this matter. It'll be the worse for him, if not yourself.'

It was evident that the assistant was not to be moved or influenced into compliance, and so Skeggs dropped the subject, and sat revolving in his mind what could be the occasion of this espionage over young Trelawney. Gradually light dawned upon him. The lawyer and his importunate clients doubtless were not at all satisfied at his, Skeggs', continued interest in Figgins after his dismissal from Mr. Hawkes' office. The assistance rendered that individual to defeat their arbitrary proceedings, though unsuccessful, had been monitory, and showed that the despised clerk was possessed of great eracuteness than imagined; and it was possible, limited though his information was in regard to the Trelawney affairs, he might see the connection between the two, and in that case the very course that had suggested itself to Skeggs, on the eve of his friend's visit, would be the one he would be likely to take, the facility for which became too apparent when the surgeon recalled the abrupt interview, of which he was an unobserved witness, between his assistant and the obnoxious clerk on the morning that the latter entered the shop during the stamping of his documents at Somerset House, and that showed the friendship existing between

the two men. Although these conjectures did not as fully occur to Skeggs as above stated, they were taking some such shape, and were in reality the true exposition of the case, and correctly accounted for the strictness with which Frendzburgh was now being guarded.

'Skeggs,' said the assistant, looking into the emptied jug, and thereby breaking in upon his host's meditations, 'you're as dull as ditch-water; you've lost your spirits.'

'Well, I do feel a little out of sorts.'

'Of course you do. You're not cut out for a saint, so give it up. You want something to stimulate you; here, send for some brandy,' and he handed him the pitcher.

Skeggs took it out of his hand, and, as he looked into his friend's face, smiled, then shook his head, and laid the jug on the table. Amused at his friend's little artifice of simulated interest in himself, but pained at the evident power the drink fiend was assuming over him, he once more expostulated with him thereon, and, without allowing time to retort, went on rattling away about old times, recalling incidents whereby he hoped to amuse and drive the subject from his mind, but he was too far gone for that; it had got into his brain, into his heart, his lungs, his liver, his blood. Hotly rolling on, the fiery fluid, to sustain its destructive energy, persistently craved for more, and unless obtained, both physical and mental would succumb, collapse into intolerable prostration.

Finding that his host was not to be moved, Mr. Grumphy rose in the midst of the effort to distract his attention from his uncontrollable desire, and, without the formula of leave-taking, hurried off to a tavern in the adjoining street. Left to himself, Mr. Skeggs soon reverted to the thoughts now uppermost in his mind, and at the close retired to his bed, to dream upon what seemed in some indefinable way to be an opening towards the relief of Figgins.

The next afternoon, having obtained leave of absence from the office, thereby again subjecting himself to the raillery of his brother clerks, who prognosticated some dire catastrophe about to result from the continued unrelenting conduct of his lady-love, Mr. Skeggs started over Waterloo Bridge, and through the New Cut wended his way towards the prison in which Figgins was confined. Without stopping to examine the contents of the pawnbrokers' windows, or inspect the articles of *vertu* at the brokers' shops, as he was in the habit of doing, or

even to read the flaming play-bills in front of the Coburg Theatre, he eventually found himself inside the gates of the Bench. Preceded by a turnkey, he passed on to the room assigned to his friend, managing to avoid the usual stoppages by the melancholy objects loitering about.

The room in which Mr. Figgins was located was, from his inability to pay for any extra articles, almost bare of furniture, and, as a consequence, its dreariness was rendered still more dreary. As intimated by his daughter, on greeting the old man, Skeggs could not but be sensible of an alteration in his appearance: his cheeks had lost their ruddy glow, and, whilst they overlapped his heavy jaws as heretofore, their puffiness was gone; and there were yellow streaks in his dull eyes, and deepening wrinkles in his brow; nor was there the strong grip of former times in his stubby, short-fingered hand. It was but too apparent that confinement and opportunities for meditation were of no greater benefit to him than to the majority of his fellow-prisoners. There was a childish querulousness, too, in his manner, bordering on peevishness. After a few preliminaries, unable to restrain himself, or to adopt any slow methodical mode of procedure, Mr. Skeggs began putting some terse and pertinent questions, with the design of obtaining a correct knowledge of certain facts relating to Frendzburgh, which he was satisfied the other could give him, if once drawn out into a relation thereof, and which, in the sequel, he believed would have a favourable bearing on his case. Mr. Skeggs' mode, however, was rather too professional to be productive of the desired end, and it was not long before the old man, provoked by the repetition of questions which he sulkily evaded, broke out into open resistance, and exclaimed with some warmth,

'Now, if so be as you're a-wanting to know hany more, you'll just quit them 'ere cross-questionings o' yours. You're like them bar-arresters, you want to make me say one thing ven I means t'other. So you just go on, an' say all you've got to say about it, an' then I'll say what I'm goin' to say, an' there'll be no mistakes.' The learned Skeggs bowed acquiescence, and, comprehending that under such a state of temper it would be useless to pursue the subject, proposed that they should resort to pipes, with the hope that, under the narcotic effect of the weed, his client's irritability would be soothed down, and the subject might be again broached with happier issue. They had pursued the suggested employ but a short time, when, by a little

adroitness, and a more guarded course, Mr. Figgins was led to rehearse some exploits of his early days, but too remote to be of much interest to his auditor, until, by degrees, after replenishing his pipe, he approached nearer the period embracing the events with which the other's anxiety was to become acquainted.

'Yes, as I were a-sayin',—and let it be a warnin' to you, Skeggs,—it were some years afore me an' your mother,—what am I sayin' of?—I mean my old voman— Now, hold on there, don't be in such a hawful 'urry.' This was said in arrest of Skeggs, who was about to signify his desire that Mr. Figgins should let his wife's designation remain as at first given, without correction.

'Vell, it were five or six years afore that 'appy hevent, as people calls it,—I halways counts by that tickler hevent, Tavy,—vell, to go back, there warn't, though I says it, a keener, stronger chap of my size in that vare'ouse, nor one more reg'lar nor proprietous in his 'haviour, 'cept Ben, an' he were smart too, but he were young; an' so they made me vare'ouseman, and Ben got my place. Ve were great cronies, Ben an' I.'

'Where did you say that was?' Skeggs ventured to inquire.

'There you are, a-hinterruptin'. Didn't I say near your old shop, in Vallbrook.'

'Oh, did you? I beg pardon, I didn't hear you.'

'Then you should. What's the use of my talking, if you don't.' It required two or three whiffs before Mr. Figgins regained his equanimity, and resumed, 'An' so, as time went by, I 'sidered I could keep a vife, and married mother, an' then my trouble began. She didn't begin it, though, mind that! No, no, Skeggs, though I say it, she's been a good vife to me; not one o' them kind, as ven they've buttered your bread an' ironed your shirt, thinks they've done a plaguey site. An' Bella's like her, as like as two peas. Skeggs, that's a blessed gal!' This was uttered with some warmth, and as he continued his reference to her, his voice lost its sternness, and considerably modulated. 'If she have hany fault, it's she's too good for hanybody; I don't see as I can hever part with her. Do you know, the little vitch is down hevery day to see me? and—and'— Mr. Figgins had recourse to his pipe to hide his emotion, which brought on a fit of coughing. 'Vell, to continue, as I were a-sayin', some time after I were married, the business abroad kept a-going wrong, specially in Jamaky,—let me see, were it Jamaky? Well, I disremember now, for ve did a sight of business in all parts; an' he closed up his 'fairs in Lunnun, an' vent abroad to see after

them. An' right sorry ve all were, men and clerks; an' as I'd been so long in his 'ploy, an' he'd took a 'tikler fancy to me, an' I'd named Bell arter his missus as died, he loaned me enough to set me up in business,—though, for the matter of that, I'm sure he never meant to ax me for it agin, but 'tended it as Bella's portion, as I told you afore, when you were 'fending this haction as fetched me here,—which I were in till deaf Bodkins an' her crew came down on me.'

'You mean to say Mr. Trelawney?' Mr. Skeggs, having, as Mr. Figgins stated, heard this account previously, was about to make it clearer.

'How can I mean that?' interrupted Mr. Figgins, whose reference to the aforesaid lady had revived his tartness. 'I mean what I says,—I mean Mother Bodkins, an' her pious legal hadviser, as he calls himself, and that precious guv'nor of your *friend* Grampus, an' the rest o' the pack.'

'You misunderstand me; I was going to say it was Mr. Trelawney you lived with, and who set you up in business.'

'Bless me, how many times have I to say so?'

'Yes, yes, O yes, I understand,' rejoined Mr. Skeggs, but who was quite sure he had not said it once before. 'And what became of Ben that you spoke of?'

'Oh, as he were fond o' the sea, which he'd been in afore he came to us, he vent in the same ship with the skipper, as he called him,—it's a naughtytickle vord for guv'nor,—an' he's followed that line hever since, and venever he comes to Hengland, allus comes to stay with me, though that's now near two years since, come Christmas. I used to think he'd a sneakin' kindness arter some one.' He looked knowingly at his listener, who rather winced. 'An' a good match he'd a made; Ben's making money. He was mate when he were last here, an' I daresay he's furder on now, if he ain't gone to Davy Jones' locker,—which is another naughtytickle vord,—and which I'd be real sorry for.'

Mr. Skeggs was becoming fidgety, and did not want to know anything more about Ben, and, as a set off, spoke disparagingly of sea life and sailors; in reference to which new-born prejudice Figgins was about to disabuse his mind, but that the other drew his attention back to his own history, as there were one or two points connected therewith, not yet alluded to, that required elucidation in order to furnish the 'missing link' whereby he hoped to be able to render Mr. Figgins some material aid, and with this object he pursued the conversation.

'Then Mr. Trelawney was married?'

'Married! Well, that's a wise sayin' o' yourn,—how could he have children if he weren't?'

Mr. Skeggs did not stop to argue the point, since, being a married man, he assumed Mr. Figgins to be much better informed on that point than he could be.

'Yes, he were married, but his wife died arter her first child was born, an' they didn't have no more after that.'

Mr. Skeggs was becoming more interested, and by way of leading him on, said, 'Poor woman! did the child die too?'

'No; and the master used to bring it down to the varehouse. He were 'nation fond of it, an' so were I, an' so were it,—it 'ud run to my harms the minit it seed me. Poor thing! poor little thing!'

'Then it did die?' interposed Skeggs, pretending to construe Mr. Figgins' plaintive tone as implying as much.

'Did he?' replied the other; 'I'd like to know vere you larnt that.'

'Was it a boy or a girl?' continued Skeggs, now too intent upon obtaining the desired information to any longer await the leisurely, prolix mode hitherto pursued.

'Well, they don't generally name gals after their fathers. Of course, if he were crisened Frendbug, he weren't a gal.'

The utterance of the name almost deprived Mr. Skeggs of any further command of himself. Here was the clue he had been wanting, and, jumping up from his seat, he exclaimed, 'Frendzburgh—Frendzburgh Trelawney!—the same, by George! I've got it now, I've got it!' Whereupon Mr. Figgins laid down his pipe, pulled his glasses out of their case, and was about putting them on to see what his young friend had got, when, to his astonishment, throwing his pipe on the table (thereby breaking it), Skeggs began hopping round the room and snapping his fingers, still ejaculating, 'I've got it, I've got it!' until, arriving at the side of the old man, he seized his hand and shook it so heartily that he sent the specs flying across the room, luckily, however, as he ascertained on pursuing them, without injury thereto. Then returning, and once more grasping him by the hand, he exclaimed,

'No, Mr. Figgins, I congratulate you, he didn't die. I know the rest; he was smuggled away off to an outlandish place yonder—above there'— Skeggs had forgotten the name, and with closed eyes, and head raised to the ceiling, was vainly

endeavouring to recall the name, when the bewildered Mr. Figgins interposed, and remonstrated.

'I say, Skeggs, don't come none o' them pious ways here; there hain't nothin' good in the ceiling, I knows to my cost, so sit down, an' let's have no more of that hacting like a lunacy.' Whereupon they re-seated themselves, and the pseudo lawyer resumed his inquiries.

'Is that all you know, sir?'

'All as I knows! You seem to know a good deal more than me.'

'Mr. Figgins,' said his examiner, assuming a forensic tone and manner, though undesignedly, 'answer me. Is that all you know?—Do you know nothing about a certain deed trust?'

'A d—d trust!' interposed the elder, mistaking the first word for a very objectionable term. 'Don't get excited, young man, and go to swearing.'

'You misunderstand me, sir. Did—not—Mr. Trelawney—before he went abroad—make a trust-deed—whereby he left the income to be derived from his estate and effects in this country, to be applied to and for the use and behoof of his said son, Frendzburgh Trelawney, and by the said deed did appoint two gentlemen, of the names respectively of Scarr and Lejette, joint trustees to carry out the provisions of the said trust, until the said Frendzburgh became of age, or until the said Trelawney, senior, returned; but if the said Trelawney, senior, should not so return, and'—

'Stop, stop, Skeggs, you're going too fast. Say it over again, and don't say so much at a time,' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, who was quite overpowered by this legal mode of putting the question.

Mr. Skeggs made one or two more efforts in the same direction, but it was not until he condescended to step down from his technical stilts, and put the questions in a more simple form, accompanied by sundry explanations, that he obtained the affirmative replies he desired, with the added information that Mr. Trelawney, senior, had more than once explained his intentions in the presence both of himself and the afore-mentioned Ben. In reference to the inquiry as to what eventually became of Mr. Trelawney, he stated it was surmised that he had perished at sea, since, on completion of the business that had necessitated his presence in that part of the world to which he had gone, he had embarked on his return in a vessel of which no tidings were ever afterwards heard; and that he understood he

had left no will,—died intestate, as Mr. Skeggs suggested, but which rather posed Mr. Figgins. Previously, however, to going abroad, he had executed a trust-deed, one of the parties thereto being a relative on the wife's side, the other the family doctor, the document itself being drawn up by Mr. Hawkes, and which himself and Ben had been called in to witness the execution of, at least by Mr. Trelawney and Captain Lejette, the surgeon having, as he heard, subsequently appended his name thereto. Prior to the execution, Mr. Trelawney, who was a thorough business man, again explained that the intention of the deed was to place his only child, a boy, together with his property, under the guardianship and control of the trustees, until his return, or, in case of his death during his absence, until the child was of age.

Elated at his success, and the favourable character of the information obtained, Mr. Skeggs entered with animation upon its more personal bearing on Mr. Figgins' case.

'Mr. Figgins, I'm going to work the oracle in this action of yours.'

'I'm afraid, Tavy, it's worked as far as it'll go.'

'No, I'm just going to begin.'

'Now, Tavy'—Figgins was about to remonstrate.

'Listen, sir,—I've found a hornet's nest.'

'Don't put your hand in it, Skeggs, which is onpleasant.'

'I'm awake, sir.'

'Where's the nest?'

'In Barge Yard,—and the swarm Messieurs Hawkes and Company.'

'Which they are,—you're right for once, Tavy; but take my advice, don't have nothin' to do with 'em,—them's queer stingers, especially the chief 'ornet.'

'I'll take my own for once,' said Skeggs, laughing. 'And so Mr. Trelawney was wrecked on his way home from—from—what part?'

Mr. Figgins hesitated a moment, and then, looking doubtfully at the other, replied, 'Ong Kong, did I say?'

'Hong Kong,—where's that? because we'll have to be well posted.'

'Ong Kong! why, don't you know where Ong Kong is, Tavy?'

'No, where is it?'

Mr. Figgins appeared surprised at his friend's limited geo-

graphical knowledge, and repeated in a slighting tone, 'Where is it! why, don't you know, Tavy?'

'No, I don't recollect just this minute.'

'Well, more do I; but it's one o' these outlandish West Ingy Islands, I know.'

'Umph! I'll make a note of that. How long ago is it?—ten years?'

'More.'

'Twelve?'

'More. No, stop, what am I sayin'?—it can't be more nor seven or eight at most.'

'You'd swear to that?'

'Me!' exclaimed Mr. Figgins; 'no, I'm deed if I do, as you said a while ago. I'll swear to nothin'—ketch me!'

In the course of further conversation, too tedious to relate, Mr. Skeggs informed himself of all the particulars his client was enabled to give, and, after making a note thereof in an old rusty leather pocket-book, with a very grave air as he did so, on returning it to his coat pocket he remarked, 'There, I think we'll corner them now. Let me see.' Thereupon he leaned back in his chair, and, balancing himself on the hind legs, appeared to be ruminating, his hands in his pockets and his eyes closed; during which Mr. Figgins was also thinking, until, arrived at the conclusion of their meditations at the same moment, they simultaneously addressed one another. Whereupon both paused to yield precedence to the other, and both commenced at the same time, until it became a problem who should speak first, when Mr. Figgins claimed the floor.

'I were going to say, Skeggs, did you say you'd seen the boy?'

'Not yet; but I've got my eye on him, and I'll put my hands on him too, in spite of them,—you'll see.'

'Well, when he's cotcht, I'd like to have a sight on him too. I wonder if he'd know me again; how big is he?—big as that?' He raised his hand to about the height of the table, not allowing much for twelve years' growth.

'I've not seen him yet, but it will not be long first.'

Mr. Figgins shook his head, then remarked, 'I'm afeared they'll be too many for you, Tavy. You'll have to get the Markis to help ye.'

'The Marquis!—who's he?'

'Why, that duke's son, as ye suspicion him to be,—which is Lord Grampus.'

'Grumphy, you mean? He won't do it,—he told me so point blank, and will do all he can to prevent my seeing him.'

'Now on'y think o' that! I knowed it, I knowed it,—that's my 'sperience of markises. Skeggs, you're too hinnocent, an' don't understand 'uman nature. I'm not much of a scollard, an' so I let Araby keep the books, but I knows A from B, an' am werry hobservant, an' have got acquainted with signs. Now, allow me to ask who's the Markis's grandfather?'

'What Marquis's grandfather?'

'Why, your partic'lar friend, the Markis o' Grumphy. Now be certain.'

'How can I tell? As far as I know, he never had one, or I'd have known something about it.'

'Ah, see that!' said Mr. Figgins, rubbing his hands. 'See that!—hadn't a grandfather!—that's it, that's a true sign!—never had one, eh?' 'Pend on it, Skeggs, he's nobody. Set it down, Skeggs, unanimous,—a man as hain't got no grandfather is suspicious,—a sign he hain't nobody.' Mr. Figgins looked quite complacent as he laid down this axiom.

Just then the usual intimation was given for the withdrawal of visitors from the prison, and, as they parted, Mr. Figgins impressed on his young friend the importance of getting him out of that place early, and to be sure and beware of the Markis.

CHAPTER LV.

DODGERS DODGED AND OUTWITTED.

BESIDES the change that Mr. Skeggs' altered circumstances had enabled him to make in his outward appearance and domestic economy, referred to in a previous chapter, his association with the wits of his office, as well as the higher tone of the extensive practice in which he was called to take his part, was affecting a still greater change in him intellectually; more thoughtful and shrewd, he was becoming more self-reliant, and was gradually gaining the confidence of his employers by his trustworthy conduct in the performance of the duties entrusted to him. He was still visionary and impulsive, as evidenced in his late intercourse with Grumphy and Figgins, these dispositions being too deeply ingrained to be extinguished, but in process of time they were kept in check or counteracted by the reactionary influence of a judgment strengthening by an experience whose teaching was not unheeded. Consequently he was in some measure able to appreciate the gravity of the position in which he was about to place himself, in obedience to his better instincts. On a calm review of the course before him, he saw plainly the difficulties, and that it would require wise counsel and prudence, as well as energy, to conduct the case to a hopeful issue. But whilst the responsibility was onerous, in undertaking the initiative of what might prove a trying and embarrassing proceeding, rendered the more so by the awkward position in which the parties interested stood to one another, and the difficulty attending the action of a client situated as Trelawney was, assuming that he could be instigated to concur in his plans, the consequence that would result from his non-interference, possessed of such a knowledge of the facts as he now had, was of too serious a nature, not only to Mr. Figgins, the primary object of his solicitude, but to young Trelawney himself, to allow the possibility of his feeling justified in remaining neutral.

It was whilst agitated by such considerations, which had occurred to him with increased force since the incidents narrated in the last chapter, that, seated one evening in his room in Lyon's Inn, Mr. Skeggs recurred to his too confidential intercourse with Mr. Grumphy (whereby he had been put on his guard against his design in seeking an interview with Frendzburgh), betrayed thereto by his impulsiveness and fancied influence with the assistant, and ignorance of his prejudice and pre-enlisted interest on the side of his employer. As there could be no doubt that he would make the surgeon aware of the intention, the difficulty of gaining his object was increased, and it therefore became a puzzling question to decide in what way to act. He had met the assistant once since that occasion, but was careful to avoid any reference to the subject, and had even kept from appearing in the neighbourhood of the surgeon's, lest he should be observed, and thereby cause a more stringent surveillance of his ward. But as this course was not likely to facilitate the much-desired interview, at the conclusion of his reverie, moved by a fresh impulse, he rose, locked his door, and strolled into the Strand, with the half-formed design of watching the premises, and, if appearances were favourable, of even passing them, in the hope of seeing the object he was in search of, or what he might assume to be that person, as he was thus far unacquainted with him. He had scarcely, however, posted himself at the opposite corner of the street, before the surgeon, issuing from his private entrance, crossed the road and rapidly approached, thereby compelling him to beat a hasty retreat in the direction of the Exeter 'Change, through which he was about to pass, when, to his consternation, he caught sight of Mr. Grumphy slowly advancing from the other end. Quick as thought he turned, and, pushing past the scarlet yeoman, mounted the side stairs to the menagerie, with which, at the cost of one shilling, for the first time and unpremeditatedly, he had the opportunity of becoming acquainted, just at the conclusion of feeding-time.

Baulked and baffled, and despairing of any early opening for the accomplishment of his purpose, he came to the resolution of addressing a note to Frendzburgh by the twopenny post, and accordingly wrote to inform him that if he would apply personally, on the evening following, at the chambers of the undersigned, between the hours of six and eight, 'he would hear of something to his advantage;' at the same time cautioning him not to let it be known that any such request had been made, as there were

certain parties about him whose interest it was to defeat the writer's purpose. This method of procedure, Mr. Skeggs felt, was hazardous for more reasons than one, but he resolved to risk it before he had recourse to a bolder one, that would undoubtedly, if successful, entail much extra resistance. Fortunately Frendzburgh happened to be in the shop when the letter was delivered, for the postman, not being able to decipher the name, after a bungling attempt handed it to the assistant, but as the man had partially pronounced the words thereon, Frendzburgh's attention was attracted, and before the other had time to claim it, which he would not have hesitated to do, he took it from his hand, and retired with it to the surgery. The occurrence, however, as well as a fancied recognition of the handwriting, had been sufficient to arouse more than a curiosity in the mind of the assistant to become acquainted with the contents.

Seven the next evening had pealed forth from St. Clement's and St. Mary's, as Mr. Skeggs nervously fidgeted around his room, unable, under the excitement occasioned by his anticipations and the partial delay, to retain his seat. At length, putting on his hat, he descended the Inn yard to the entrance into Holywell Street, where he halted and scrutinized each foot-passenger as he hurried past, with the vague hope of identifying Trelawney. He had been thus employed about ten minutes, when, looking in the direction in which he expected him to come, his keen eye sharpened by his early experience in serving writs, caught sight of the familiar figure of his *ci-devant* friend Mr. Grumphy, looking into the window of the dealer in masquerade and theatrical paraphernalia, that is, when he was not diverted therefrom to a rapid survey of the foot-passengers on both sides the street, which he was on every approach of such. Chagrined at this *contretemps*, Mr. Skeggs was not long in coming to the conclusion that it was not accidental, and that his friend's sudden interest in the contents of the shop window was assumed; his appearance there, he was satisfied, had some reference to his plans, which were thus likely to be thwarted. The first impulse was to cross the street and descend the opposite passage into the Strand, and then make his way a little in advance of Holywell Street, and intercept his expected visitor, who, he argued, must be coming, or Grumphy would not be there, but, on second thoughts, his not being acquainted with Frendzburgh, as well as the possibility of missing him in the interim, deterred him. Thereupon another thought occurred, upon which he immediately acted.

Stepping out of the entrance, he walked toward the assistant, and, with feigned surprise at this unexpected meeting so near his dwelling, commenced an earnest effort to engage his attention in the contents of the shop window, in which he was immediately joined by the pertinacious proprietor thereof, but which, whilst it had the effect of driving both off, did not succeed in distracting Mr. Grumphy from his examination of the passengers, of which Skeggs was not slow to take account; and, though vexed that he had by some means become acquainted with the contents of his letter, it at the same time further assured him his letter had reached the proper party, and that he was expected to respond to the invitation.

It might be, too, that the delay was occasioned by the said party having discovered Mr. Grumphy on his road, whose disappearance he awaited before making any attempt to reach the Inn by the route indicated in Mr. Skeggs' note, who had specially named Holywell Street lest the other should take another way.

As Mr. Grumphy declined to accompany him any farther down the street than to the entrance to the Inn, into which it did not suit Mr. Skeggs' purpose that he should be invited, or even linger about, it became imperative that some plan should be taken to remove him from the vicinity thereof as speedily as possible. But one mode likely to effect this presented itself to Octavius, and which he resorted to with some compunction, but endeavoured to justify to himself as being a *quid pro quo.* Accordingly he invited him to enter a public-house, at which he purposely halted, and take a glass of brandy and water. There was a time when such a proposition, so diametrically opposed to his conduct on the last visit to his lodgings, would have been understood and treated as it merited, but that time was gone; Mr. Grumphy was no longer his former self,—the ruling passion had become too strong to tolerate other considerations, and, yielding unresistingly to its mastery, he entered the place, and clutched greedily at the glass of 'cold without' that his friend ordered on his choice. By the time he had emptied the tumbler about ten minutes had elapsed, which Skeggs judged would be sufficient to allow an opportunity for Frendzburgh to reach his chambers, presuming he had been prevented so doing previously by the presence of the assistant in the street. So, pulling out his watch, he stated he had an engagement and must be off, but by way of detaining the other ordered another glass for him, and then hurried away. The morality of this act cannot be defended; it

was the reasoning of a perverted mind, teaching that evil might be done when the end proposed was good, but Skeggs was only affording an illustration of what every unrenewed heart is capable.

As he strode down the street, he congratulated himself on the success of his scheme for putting his quondam friend out of the way, but, as he turned into the Inn, he, to his disgust, saw Mr. Grumphy standing at the door of the tavern looking after him. With the hope, however, that the ruse had been successful, he hastened to his lodgings, where he was informed by the housekeeper that a gentleman had called during his absence, whose name, on Mr. Skeggs repeating it to her, she remembered was Trelawney, but as he, Skeggs, had not informed her when he would return, she had requested him to call again, which he had promised to do in half-an-hour. Mr. Skeggs felt very much like pitching into the housekeeper for not detaining him, but remembering that, not anticipating his own withdrawal from the Inn, he had omitted to give the needful instructions, he was content to abuse himself instead, for the unfortunate occurrence whereby his stratagem had been defeated. From the position in which he last saw Grumphy, he was assured the chances were that Frendzburgh would be recognised by that individual on his return; consequently he obtained as circumstantial a description of his personal appearance as the old lady was able to give on so short an acquaintance, and, learning that he had stated that he had some business to transact a short distance beyond Temple Bar, he was in the act of hastening away, in the hope of intercepting him on his return, when he was arrested by the sight of Grumphy in the gateway. Before the other had time to observe him, Skeggs withdrew around the south-east angle, and disappeared in an open doorway. He had only time to accomplish this when Mr. Grumphy reached the end of the passage opening on to the Inn, and stood making a careful survey around the enclosure. As the dull yellow light of the oil lamp afforded little aid in discerning any object beyond its immediate locality, he turned the opposite angle to which Skeggs had retreated, and walked close to the buildings to avoid notice, until he reached the old hall, when he halted under its dark shadow. From this position he took another survey of the yard, then raised his eyes and closely scanned the windows of the sombre old tenements, over whose architectural configuration no spirit of change had passed since the period when the hostelry, of the days of the Bluebeard King

Harry, had merged into the Inn of the times of his renowned daughter, swearing Queen Bess, if we except that, coated with the accumulated dirt and soot of centuries, they were hugging each other in monastic gloom and silence once foreign to them, as though draped in mourning for the bygone glorious days, when, within their enclosure, the forensic lore of its immortal jurist attracted crowds of litigious clients and charmed students, or echoed and flashed to the boisterous revellings of wits and benchers, who nightly thronged the hall from the neighbouring Inns of Court, whence they came flocking as doves from their cotes, or, more appositely, like daws from their rookeries, to render homage to the superior wisdom and learning congregated within the walls of that renowed place. Now, how changed!—the hall itself a mausoleum of its past history, grim and decaying; its dirt-begrimed windows, closed doors, and sills matted with weeds and fibred soil, indicating that its interior was left to the orgies of the phantoms of the long-ago *savans*, the *prestige* of whose names forbade the desecrating hand of the renovating spoiler to meddle therewith, or to leave its ruthless grasp on the protesting walls.

At the close of his inspection, Mr. Grumphy had withdrawn close to the blocked-up doorway of the hall, and, leaning against the Doric column, stood immoveable, save when disturbed by the feeble glimmer struggling through an opposite window, that betokened some modern recluse or lone student yet lingered in that musty purlieu, catching, it may be, an inspiration from the past.

The few leaves that still remained on the solitary tree, the last of the number that once alcoved each side, were now and again quivering to the gusts of wind that forced their way through the arched court, and which, coursing to the bottom of the yard, lifted the dry crumbling heap that had thus early fallen, unable longer to maintain their feeble hold, off the sapless boughs, and eddied them into a corner, or deposited a portion in a half-opened doorway. Save the momentary disturbance thereby occasioned, there was nothing but the rumbling of some passing vehicle in the surrounding streets, to attract the attention of either the assistant or his unperceived observer.

Mr. Skeggs crept on tip-toe from one side of the narrow passage in which he had taken shelter, to the opposite, then rested on one foot, then on the other, changed his position half-a-dozen times, drew a long sigh, and peeped out, but saw no prospect of relief, as he discerned the outlined form of Mr. Grumphy, as motionless as though he was the carved figure of one

of those ancient warders, that in other days kept watch over its closed entrance. It thereupon occurred to him that it would contribute somewhat to his ease if he reposed his nether man on the bottom tread of the stairs ascending to the apartments above, and, with the intention of following up that idea, he was about to step towards it, when he was stopped by two brilliant scintillations glaring on him from the landing above, and that caused a rather uncomfortable sensation and a statue-like attitude, by no means inferior to his friend's over the way, only not so voluntary. How long he might have continued contemplating the phenomena thus presented to his especial notice before arriving at any solution with regard thereto, cannot be determined, for suddenly such a rapid oscillation of the two sparks ensued, that, oblivious to all else, Mr. Skeggs turned round and was about to take to his heels, when, with greater celerity, the sparks came leaping down the stairs and made also for the door, but which in his flight Skeggs fell against and slammed, just as the owner of the sparks was rushing through, thereby inflicting on its hinder parts a blow that caused it to give a wild scream as it bounded over the yard towards Mr. Grumphy, whose state of repose thus unceremoniously interfered with occasioned him to instantly put himself into an attitude of defence, which, being as speedily taken note of by the feline, it dexterously shied past him without affording time to carry out his intentions, whatever they may have been. As Mr. Grumphy was not long in coming to a conclusion as to the cause of the temporary disturbance, he quietly readjusted himself into his former position.

As for Mr. Skeggs, he experienced no further desire to repose upon the bottom stair, all sense of weariness in that regard having gone with the cat. Nevertheless he did not feel more at ease than before; on the contrary, this little adventure had rather unnerved him, and more than once his fertile imagination photographed several pairs of eyes on the stairs above, as also at the end of the dark passage, whence, too, he thought he heard a hollow moan, though it might have been the wind; at all events, he felt more comfortable as he took his station nearer the threshold of the door,—at least he would have felt so, but just as he placed his feet there, a door on the opposite side higher up creaked, and though he gazed intently in that direction, he could see no one issue therefrom. It might again have been the wind, or even the wretched cat pushing her way into another passage, but then it might not.

'Bless me!' thought Mr. Skeggs, the perspiration standing on his brow, 'what could it be? That's the very chambers where Weare lived, that Thurtell murdered down at Elstree!' and speedily that tragic event, that had happened a year or two previously, and occasioned such a sensation throughout the land, began to assume a ghastly shape in Mr. Skeggs' agitated mind, somewhat after the manner described in Hood's serio-comic lines:

> 'They cut his throat from ear to ear,
> His brains they battered in;
> His name was Mr. William Weare,
> He dwelt in Lyon's Inn.'

And as it was commonly reported, even beyond the precincts of the Inn, that his ghost was in the habit of making nocturnal visits to the vicinity of his late abode, at the window of which, as well as in the yard, he had more than once been seen, though at a later hour, it should not be a matter of surprise that Mr. Skeggs became so worked up, that he was on the eve of preparing for a bolt from his place of concealment, especially as the thought was fast becoming a conviction that the late spark apparition was nothing less than the form in which the murdered man had chosen that night to appear, and in which case it was evident he had crossed over to visit his former dwelling. But at the moment that his terrified imaginings were culminating in the proposed manœuvre, Mr. Grumphy, incited by some other reason, moved out of his recess, and walked cautiously over towards the doorway in which Mr. Skeggs stood, thereby effectually changing the current of his thoughts, and compelling him, with trepidation, arising from a new source, to retreat to the further end of the passage. A moment or two of suspense, as he heard his approaching footstep, caused a temporary cessation of Skeggs' breathing; another second or two and he had passed, when, breathing more freely, he crept forward to the door, with the intention of watching his movements, but, to his dismay, Mr. Grumphy was returning, and Skeggs had scarcely time to regain the end of the passage before he stood on the threshold.

This retrograde movement appeared to have been occasioned by the opening of a door just above, whence a man emerged, and passed down towards the opening into Holywell Street. As Mr. Grumphy still remained within the doorway, Mr. Skeggs experienced some alarm, lest a movement on his part, or curiosity on the part of the other, should lead to a discovery, not to

mention the possibility of one of the tenants or the caretaker of the house coming upon him, and challenging him as to his business there, which certainly bore a suspicious appearance. In the midst of these rising fears, a footstep was heard advancing from the entrance of the yard, that caused a momentary apprehension lest it should be Trelawney, but which quickly subsided as the sounds intimated that the party had gone to the other side, a direction that, as he now knew where Skeggs resided, he would not be likely to take. Mr. Grumphy stepped out, and, keeping close to the buildings, made a detour, with the intention, no doubt, of discovering whether it was the person he was on the watch for. Availing himself of the opportunity, Mr. Skeggs made for the door, and stealthily hastened along under the shade of the walls, until he reached the street below, into which he emerged with no small feeling of relief. Here he deliberated for a second or two, undecided whether to linger about the gateway or proceed in the direction Trelawney had signified his intention of taking, as previously about doing when driven back by the appearance of Grumphy in the gateway. Finally he resolved to remain in the vicinity thereof. From his experience, as already intimated, at identification from mere description, of parties on whom, whilst in Mr. Hawkes' employ, he was required to serve various legal processes, he had become rather expert, and forthwith commenced a rude inspection of each young man that approached from the Bar. Presently a youth of about the figure and size he had pictured in his mind entered the street, and, stepping over to him as he stopped at the window of the bookstore, he tapped him on the shoulder, and requested to know if he was looking for any one. The young gentleman stepped back, buttoned up his coat, and, without saying a word, crossed rapidly to the other side and hurried off, watched by his interrogator until he had passed the gateway. But whilst thus occupied, Mr. Skeggs had allowed a second unobserved to pass him, and he was in the act of starting after him, when he caught sight of a third entering the narrow end of the street, and, with a truer instinct, he exclaimed as he walked towards him,

'Ah, that's him! upon my word, fine-looking fellow,—gentleman every inch. Beg your pardon, sir, your name Trelawney?'

'That's my name,' said the young gentleman, with a polite bow.

'Thought so. Glad to see you, Mr. Trelawney,—very glad to see you. My name's Skeggs,—Octavius Skeggs,—at whose chambers

you called a short time since. Sorry I was out at the moment,—returned just after you had gone.'

'I was on my way there now, and will accompany you,' remarked Frendzburgh, about to move in that direction.

'Beg pardon,' said Skeggs, looking towards the entrance of the Inn, fearful they might be discovered. 'No objection, we'll turn towards the Bar; particular reason for doing so, and will explain as we go along.'

Thereupon, as they sauntered along Picket Street, he informed him of what had just transpired, but which appeared so inexplicable, that it was not until reiterated with strong protestations that he could give credence thereto, since, besides the unaccountable reason for his being so watched, the fact of any one being aware of the proposed interview was sufficient to create considerable uneasiness, as it demonstrated an amount of espionage that showed his most private actions were known. The note received from Mr. Skeggs had been destroyed without coming under the eye of any other than himself, except, as related, when merely handed to Mr. Grumphy by the postman to verify the address. However, as it could have been learned from no other source, an opportunity presented itself for the display of Mr. Skeggs' legal acumen, and it was not long before his cross-examination caused Frendzburgh to remember that, prior to his committing it to the flames, he had deposited it in his greatcoat pocket, but he asserted it could not have been there for more than half-an-hour.

As soon as Mr. Skeggs had elicited this piece of information, and thereby added to the perplexity of Trelawney, in answer to his many inquiries as to the cause of such procedure, he informed him that it was for the purpose of affording an explanation of kindred acts, whereby he would be made aware of the peculiar position in which he was placed, and the serious way in which another party was affected thereby; that he had sought this interview by the only means open to him, as he had already been refused an introduction. He then went on to state that, as under the circumstances it would be unwise to return to his chambers, they would adjourn to his club-room. This latter was said with an air and emphasis that was intended to impress Frendzburgh with a sense of the standing of his newly-acquired friend, and that might thereby act as a foil to any disparaging idea connected with the social position of a lawyer's clerk; and which he further hoped to increase by informing him that he held

the important positions of secretary and treasurer to the said club, a piece of information that did call forth an expression of surprise how he was able to perform the joint duties of two such responsible posts. Mr. Skeggs only shook his head thereat, and compressed his lips, the latter, perhaps, lest they should betray the fact that he was not required to keep any minutes of their proceedings as secretary, and that the funds in the treasurer's hands did not exceed three shillings and twopence, the accumulated amount of fines of one penny each, and weekly payments to the same extent, and which were not to be disbursed until they reached the sum of five shillings. As Mr. Skeggs concluded his little bit of egotism, they turned into Shire Lane, but had not taken half-a-dozen steps before Frendzburgh made some demur to proceeding farther, until reassured by the strong asseverations of his self-constituted mentor, who informed him, with a mysterious air, that he was safe under his protection, as he could go through it at all times, night or day, without any one attempting to molest him. No wonder that Frendzburgh hesitated; there were few more forbidding places than Shire Lane, or, as also called, Lower Serles Place, distinguished even in James the First's time by the appropriate name of Rogues' Lane, aptly described in a late magazine as a 'vile, squalid place, noisy and noxious, almost inaccessible to light or air, swarming with a population of thief-catchers (with whom, possibly, Mr. Skeggs had been classed, and thereto owed his immunity), gin-sellers, and worse; a vile haunt, where men were robbed.' Guided through this repellent place by the light of a solitary lamp, they wended their way, until, higher up, an improvement was perceptible. About the centre of the lane were some old-fashioned, gabled-fronted, bay-windowed houses, once the residence of a respectable class; whilst at the upper end was the sheriff's temporary jail, or sponging-house, as it was termed, the place at which the redoubtable Captain Lejette had taken up his enforced residence, preceded a few years by the notorious Horne Tooke. Serles Place proper, still higher up, was quite a respectable locality, and strangely in contrast with its nether end, rich in historic as well as social interest. Here stood the once renowned Trumpet Tavern, the rendezvous of the celebrated Tatler Club, but on which learned association of wits, as well as on other memorabilia, it would not be wise to dwell, lest Mr. Skeggs and his guest be left too long in the lane; contenting ourselves with this single allusion thereto, made by way of afford-

ing some clue to the designation of Mr. Skeggs' association, which, probably in commemoration thereof, was called 'The Praters' Club.' Into the room in which its weekly meetings were held the two now entered, and retired into the farther corner. A glass of negus, ordered by Mr. Skeggs, was placed before each; but, not yet initiated into the habits of young men about town, Frendzburgh declined to bear his friend companionship either in a pipe or cigar.

After a few preliminaries, Skeggs proceeded to enlighten Frendzburgh by a relation of such particulars connected with his affairs as he was himself in possession of, but which was not as clear as he could have wished, owing to the imperfect information he had obtained, but enough so to awaken in his guest a just appreciation of the serious position in which he was placed. His earlier recollections of his father and his business tallied with the few circumstances related by Figgins, and repeated by Skeggs. That a mystery hung over him, both in regard to his wardship and his prospects, he had always felt, and been more persuaded of since his arrival in London, but for the solution now offered he was unprepared, and, as he revolved it in his mind, pleasant as was the thought connected with his unexpected claim to means that might place him in good if not independent circumstances, he was not slow to comprehend that the account to which he had listened revealed grave and painful features, that would not only involve him in a labyrinth of difficulties, but bring him into direct and fierce collision with his guardians, with one of whom he was so awkwardly situated. His first idea, therefore, was by an appeal to the surgeon and his uncle to afford them an opportunity of righting matters without subjecting themselves to an exposure that might be so disastrous to them. But to this Mr. Skeggs, whose knowledge of the men and their tortuous ways, though partial, convinced him they were not to be won by such means, at once objected, assuring him that he was in the hands of those who were more than a match for them both, and prepared to go to any extreme, as evidenced in their conduct towards Figgins, and thus far towards Frendzburgh himself; and although they would naturally be alarmed on learning that he had become aware of their proceedings, it would only make them the more wary, and being thus 'forewarned,' would, as they already were to a great extent, cause them to be 'forearmed' and he would not be surprised, unless cautiously proceeded with, if they resorted to some course

similar to that already pursued in consigning him to the custody of the Yorkshire schoolmaster. At all events, as he was at present a minor, and under their guardianship, and without legal evidence sufficient to either proceed to any overt act or counteract any adverse designs, it would require great circumspection lest they should render it impossible to prove his rights. Under these circumstances, Frendzburgh consented, though with some reluctance, to the whole matter being placed in the hands of Mr. Skeggs' employers, where, besides his being able to rely on their integrity and ability, he would have the additional advantage of his assistance. An early day was named, on which, without further notice, Frendzburgh should wait on the attorneys, to whom Skeggs would previously state the case as far as he was conversant therewith. Everything being thus arranged, to the great delight and satisfaction of Skeggs, they closed their consultation, and parted at the foot of the lane to avoid the possibility of jointly encountering the assistant, who might still be on the look-out for them.

Mr. Skeggs took care to caution Frendzburgh against betraying the fact of his having seen him, and not to allow himself, for the present, to be drawn into any conversation respecting the subject of their interview, which, considerably affected by the gravity of his position, he promised to attend to, and was not long in discovering that it required all the address of which he was master to avoid.

Situated as he was, he saw the wisdom of not precipitating matters by any premature disclosures, but the thoughtful and occasionally absent manner, hitherto unusual to him, were too significant not to render the surgeon suspiciously uncomfortable, and more than once called forth the raillery of his lady, whose jealousy at the occasional neglect of the hitherto gallant attention to her exorbitant demands caused her to attribute it to that which is generally uppermost in the female mind in such cases, his having fallen in love with one of their fair patients; an equally unfortunate inference for the young student, as it suggested an additional source of trouble in another direction to the interested surgeon.

On his interview with Messieurs Nettle and Barrem, they confirmed Mr. Skeggs' statement of the difficulties in the way of ascertaining his rights, and in case of resistance the probability of a tedious suit, and that, therefore, they would have to proceed at first cautiously, and endeavour to gain all the information

possible before taking legal measures, that, if adopted precipitately, might damage their cause. Armed with facts and evidence, it was possible that they might effect a favourable compromise, that would render a law-suit unnecessary, and relieve him from the unpleasant predicament in which his wardship as a minor placed him. One difficulty to this prudent course presented itself, in the apparent necessity for an injunction to stay the sale of that portion of the estate advertised in the papers, and which sale could only be effected, if the state of the case turned out to be as they fancied, under the assumption that Frendzburgh was not in existence, unless the trust-deed had been tampered with. To ascertain this, as well as to gain an insight into the real nature of their proceedings, it was proposed to make overtures as though on behalf of an intended purchaser, when an examination of the title offered (by their conveyancing clerk to be employed for that purpose) would probably reveal sufficient on which to make out a *prima facie* case, coupled with information gained from Figgins and others.

In the meantime, the irritating surveillance to which he was continually subject would, to a youth otherwise reared than Frendzburgh, have rendered his situation almost insupportable, but the courage and self-command that had stood him in such need, when, friendless and unsup orted, he stood by the ill-used boys at school, or resisted the combined efforts of those in authority against himself, did not desert him under these more serious circumstances. But, keen in his perceptions and ardent in his temperament, it required great firmness to master the resentment provoked by the action of the surgeon and his satellite Grumphy; towards the latter, however, he could not occasionally refrain from retaliating. Another element that tended to render this self-abnegation the more difficult, while smarting under a sense of the wrong done to himself, was the reflection, that now became a conviction, that his little friend Willie Wilton was also the victim of a plot, and thereupon he renewed his efforts to ferret out his history. In addition to all this was his sympathy for his father's old warehouseman, whose hard lot, Skeggs had taken special pains to impress on him, was a consequence of his connection with his affairs, and which he promised to do all in his power to alleviate.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE PRODIGY.

BUT few changes had occurred at Grumbleby since Frendzburgh's departure therefrom, but amongst those few may be noted the withdrawal of Aslem, unlamented by any but those who, in return for their special fealty, benefited by his especial patronage. This change, however, brought no alteration in the bullying system. One tyrant only passed away to give place to a successor, equally as exacting and imperious; for, as Cowper has it,

> 'The puny tyrant burns to subjugate
> The free republic of the whip-gig state;
> The little Greeks look trembling at the scales,
> Till the 'best tongue' or 'heaviest hand' prevails.'

Here, however, the 'best tongue' never prevailed. The coveted post of 'cock of the wharf,' as termed in their vernacular, though usually contested by the bravest, was always won by the strongest, if not the biggest, in subordination to whom, the conquered thereupon, in common with the smaller tyrants, were content to crow.

One other change, however, requires to be recorded, both because of its immediate effect and its ultimate consequences. The elder Kearas now seldom or ever visited the school-room or grounds. Few as had been his appearances there heretofore, they had been of advantage to the boys in their influence on their immediate preceptors, who quite understood that they were in some way amenable to higher authority for the government of his subjects; now, however, this wholesome restraint removed to a minimum extent, they were not slow in profiting by their unchallenged rule.

There were seasons, as we have seen, when the naturally jolly and easy-tempered old schoolmaster could be wheedled into displays of kindness that tended to occasional ameliorations of the

rigour of their condition, notably seen in the facility with which he could be coaxed out of a holiday; or would grant an extra allowance of pig's liver for dinner, or even scatter a few halfpence amongst them, though this last had to be performed out of view of the kitchen window, lest it should bring down the wrath of the schoolmistress, who, in such event, would have predicted ruin to the establishment, with visions of which she would have continued to entertain him for the next week or two; but these seasons, seldom as they were, were now of still rarer occurrence, access to the Grumbleby magnate being so exceedingly difficult that it had ceased to be sought,—not that it was submitted to without effort, even though attended with danger of punishment.

At length it began to be whispered that Mr. Kearas was rarely at home or in bed until after midnight, which late hour of retirement necessitated an equally late hour of rising, when he usually soon after again disappeared to spend his time at the nearest village or town, and returned, as Milly informed Willie, ordinarily in a very pleasant mood, and uttered some very funny things. At such times he would insist upon the boys being roused from their beds and despatched to their homes, or require to be forcibly held back from ascending to their rooms to proclaim a holiday. On more than one occasion, on being lifted off his horse by Jurdy or Tommy, assisted by the usher or junior master, on reaching the door-step, moved by an uncontrollable amount of affection for those worthies, he suddenly threw his arms around their necks and hugged them with such fervour, that, losing their balance, the trio came bang against the door, and, bursting it open, tumbled pell-mell into the entry, whence, after regaining their own perpendicular, the two aids could only succeed in raising the prostrate autocrat to the same position by the timely arrival of the incensed schoolmistress, whose volubility inspired him with vital force sufficient to assist in the effort.

Evidently, as Milly summed up, these, and a few other such novel freaks on the part of the schoolmaster, denoted that a change, and a very decided one, was passing over him; which, judging by the conduct of his staff, was not deemed to his credit, as the head of an establishment that had hitherto claimed a pre-eminence over its rivals.

'T' owd measter's gone to Bearnard this morning,' said Trimmer to Kappa, as they were going along the playground playing leap-frog.

'What's he gone for?' said the other.

'To fetch home a new boy.'

'Be there another coming? so much the waur for us.'

'More the merrier!' exclaimed Trimmer, as he took the next leap, and ran a few paces in advance, and sloped his back.

'Bud fewer better t' fare,' replied the other, as he raised himself for a run. 'Duck your heead,' which command being complied with, he ran and leaped; then, turning round to the other, said in a low tone, 'I say, lets you an' I get the first suck at him;' and turning off, with their arms around each other's neck, they were soon out of Willie's hearing, who happened to be sauntering by during this conversation.

'A new boy,' thought Willie; 'I wonder if he's like me when I came here, and if he has an aunt, and whether Dr. Scarr sent him.' Pursuing this train of thought, he went on to Nanny's, to whom he communicated what he had just heard; who thereupon repeated her oft-expressed wonder 'where all the boys came from,' arriving, however, at her own conclusion, 'that there was any amount of them in London,' of the same doubtful parentage as, she held, were the majority of the Grumbletonians, and which confirmed her in the opinion that it was that wicked place referred to in the Scriptures under the designation of 'Babylon the mother of harlots.'

On Mr. Kearas' entry into the town of Barnard Castle, to which, as correctly stated by the boy, he had proceeded, he was half-an-hour after the arrival of the wondrous machine, nicknamed by the amazed dwellers along the road, 'Puffing Billy' (the line since his journey to Darlington with Frendzburgh having been extended to Barnard Castle), propelled by neither man nor beast, but by a giant motor that put the strength of both to scorn, drawing in its train a procession of vehicles, laden with merchandise and passengers, in its progress over bridges, across viaducts and through chasms, in mockery of the former prognosticated insurmountable obstacles, and now become the talk and wonder, not only of England, but of other lands, though yet in a rude state compared to its after development.

Finding on inquiry that the boy had not come by the train, Mr. Kearas decided to await the arrival of the coach, which continued tenaciously to compete with its monster rival, affecting to despise the new-fangled idea, whilst persistently patronized by a few antiquated or timid travellers, resolved to adhere to the only rational mode of public conveyance. The schoolmaster

retired to an inn, in the room of which some of the passengers by the railway were lounging, and called for a glass of warm brandy and water, whilst he ran over the *Times* a few days old.

'Wall, it beats all how them machines do go,' said a farming-looking Durhamite. 'I doan't wunner they get out o' breath an' go a-puffing so.'

'Aw canno mak 't oot mysel', nother,' observed a young Yorkshireman, 'an' aw watch t' chap as tha' ca'd enginner.'

'Don't thee know?' chimed in a third; 'why, I can tell ye,—he turned a peg, an' that set her a-goin', right off.'

'Noa, noa! 'at's noa t' way,' responded the Yorkshireman; 'bud aw'll tell tha aht aw thowt, he's getten a foire insoide t' machine, an' a kittle o' waater on top 't, an' when 't biles he poors t' water on t' wheels, an' then thur dither an' goa loike mad.'

'I doan't see that at all,' exclaimed the farmer; 'you might pour water on wheels till ever an' a day, an they wouldna goa.'

'Hay, mon, bud thay doan't see. It's hot waater.'

'What differs that?'

''At's a' the differ, a' coorse. Aw'd loike t' see uv tha'd stan' still, uv tha'd a pot o' boilin' waater poared on tha.'

This mode of putting it evidently carried some weight, as no further objection was made thereto; and the farmer proceeded to fill and light his pipe, as though too much engaged in that operation to reply. In this interesting employ he was soon joined by the other two.

At this stage, however, the schoolmaster, whose attention had been drawn off the newspaper by the conversation, took up the subject, and in a very learned manner attempted to account for the phenomena of the engine's movement by a theory of his own, but of so wild a nature that it was rejected *in toto*; but, as in the course of his laboured dissertation he had referred to a spinning-jenny on the Greta, it originated a new topic of conversation.

'You live near the Greta, then?' remarked the farmer to the schoolmaster, who nodded an assent. 'Keep one o' they schools?' continued he, Mr. Kearas' mode of explanation of the former subject suggesting the idea.

'Academies, you mean, I presume?' replied Mr. Kearas with a dignified air.

The Yorkshireman pricked up his ears, knocked the top ashes out of his pipe, and took a scrutiny of the schoolmaster;

then, after a draw or two, exclaimed, 'Wall, aw'm as mooch capt t' knaw aht cooms o' a' they lods as goa to yon 'cadmies, as ye ca' 'm, as aw'm t' ravel aboot t' other theng; happen, measter, tha con kest a leet on 't, loike tha didst on t' engine?'

'Do!' replied the schoolmaster a little curtly; 'why, what would they do?

'Ah, 'at's a poozler, begow!'

'Sir,' responded Mr. Kearas, 'of course it would be to the ignorant. In the first place, an academy is a hall of learning, whereat is taught the dead languages, such as Latin, French, arithmetic, writing, spelling, reading, and all the other arts and sciences, at the astonishing low charge of twenty pounds per annum, board and washing included, no extras, no holidays, six towels, two shirts, one comb, a brush, shoe-horn, and—and'—Here Mr. Kearas, who had taken his pocket-book from his side pocket and extracted a card therefrom, was about to read from it, when he was interrupted by his interrogator inquiring what they were fed on.

'Fed on, sir? the diet is varied.'

'Varried enow, aw reckon. Pobs an' skoy-bloo wun morn, an' skoy-bloo an' pobs t' next, an' then back agen t' next. Taters an' a smell o' poark liver foı dinner th' day, an' cowd taters withoot the liver t' next, an' back agen;' the Yorkshireman winked at the farmer as he concluded his fanciful account of the academical fare.

'Were you ever at one?' inquired the schoolmaster, his suspicions probably awakened by the appropriateness of the description.

'Begow, uv aw've nowt else to be thankfu' for, aw'm thankfu' for 'at, 'at aw nivver wur, bud aw knaw'd a kid as wur.'

'And where was he educated?' inquired the schoolmaster with some hesitancy, lest it should have been nearer than agreeable.

'He wur never eddicated,—he wur speflicated, for he'd nowt left on him bud skin, when aw knaw'd 'im.'

'What happened him?' interposed the third traveller, who had been skimming over the paper that the schoolmaster laid down, but now became interested in the conversation.

'Happened!' replied the Yorkshireman, separating the strands of his favourite shag with his fingers, previously to thrusting a fresh supply thereof into his pipe, and then, whilst he performed the latter operation, passing the paper containing the surplus to

his interrogator, who went through the same process, both re-lighting their pipes at the bowl of the farmer's. During the pause Mr. Kearas called for another glass, whereat the three repeated the order on their own account.

Whilst these orders were being complied with, the farmer rose and looked out of the window, and remarked, as he returned to his seat, that it would be a stormy night, which was presently confirmed by gusts of wind and pattering rain against the panes of glass. After a mutual application to their glasses, the person who made the inquiry previously again requested to be informed what happened to the boy alluded to by the Yorkshireman, but which the schoolmaster endeavoured to divert attention from by asking at what hour the coach would arrive, and some other particulars in relation thereto. Having satisfied him thereon, the former again returned to the subject, and requested the Yorkshireman would let them hear about that boy, in which request he was now joined by the farmer.

'Wall, tha see, aw cum'd acraas 'im wun cowd neet, leggin' a' o' a heap unner a hedge; it wur raanin' an' blaain' soa, 't warn't fet for a tooad to be aght. Aw thowt a' furst t'wur a bunnel o' rags, an' aw shot 't wi' mi fooit, an' then two ees oppened. "'Aht's dooen' thur?" aw sed, "joomp oop;" an' then aw lugged 'im oop 'awf deead wi' cowd an' freet, an' aw got oot o' 'im aht he'd roon fro wun o' thur scooils, an' he wur goin' t' soom taan, aht he'd noa noashun on. Soa aw took t' poar pinnerin' theng hoam, tho' aw'm ower threnged wi' childer mysen, bud woife sed shoo'd foin room tull he'd getten woord fro' he's poar mither.'

'How old was he?' demanded Mr. Kearas.

'Wall, he mud happen be noine or ten, an' 'ud ah fotched tears throo t' heart o' a stoan to harken t' yon lod.'

'What did he tell ye?' said the farmer, impatient at the delay occasioned by the efforts of the Yorkshireman to revive his pipe, which had nearly gone out during this narration.

'Of course you took him back to the school,' remarked the schoolmaster; 'any one harbouring runaways deserves to be trounced.'

The Yorkshireman fired up, and was about, as he said, to tell him a bit of his mind, but that the others interposed, and urged him to proceed with his story, in which they had become quite interested. After a few strong whiffs at his pipe, he became sufficiently calmed down to resume his narrative, but which,

for the reader's sake, shall, as on a former occasion, be rendered into English, although, of course, at the sacrifice of terseness and beauty.

The Prodigy.

Fizzle, for that was the only name that he knew of his ever having, and which in all probability was a nickname conferred on him by his schoolmates, as bearing some affinity to his original cognomen, could only go back in his recollections to the circumstances connected with his first entrance upon scholastic grounds, according to which, however, it was so long since, that it must have been twice the period that had elapsed since his entrance into a world that was by no means so stirred by the event as to preserve any memorial thereof. The first incident pleasurable in his earliest remembrance, was that he rode a long time in a coach drawn by four horses, in company with a man whom he called uncle, but as this degree of consanguinity was one very general to the Yorkshire schoolboy, much more so than the paternal, it might be that Fizzle had unwittingly adopted the term in its application to the schoolmaster himself, by whom he may have been brought down to the academy; and this seems the more plausible, as his next recollections were of a lean, cadaverous man, whose face resembled the same individual, except that the bland benevolent style and manner had given place to a severe, morose expression; and an equally perceptible change was apparent in his habiliments, his black suit being replaced by very homely attire. Be this as it may, from this period his memory was more extensive. As there were only half-a-dozen other boys on his first induction into the school, it was probable the institution had not long been in operation, or if so, that it had not secured the patronage bestowed on its many rivals.

Passing over the relation of events which, though on a smaller scale, found their counterpart in the doings at Grumbleby, there came a period in the waif's history, in which, from being a chattel of very small worth, he became invaluable to his present proprietor, and it happened in this wise: To the no small amazement, at first bordering on alarm, of Mr. Hezekiah Poundall, the schoolmaster, and his spare rib,—though his gaunt form denoted he had very little to spare,—despite the varied diet so aptly described by the Yorkshireman in his rejoinder to the

master of Grumbleby, Fizzle all of a sudden took it into his head, or preferably, body, to grow fat. At first it was considered an illusion, but a few weekly measurements and examinations confirmed the unprecedented fact. As such a phenomenon was contrary to all rule, and a most reprehensible departure from the normal condition of the other pupils, on whom it was a downright reflection, it occasioned considerable uneasiness, and a resort to sundry contrivances in order to reduce the anomaly to the regulated standard. The sky-blue was rendered still more bluish, whilst the porridge and floury hasty were reduced both in quantity and quality, but without effect, for, alas for poor Fizzle's groaning inside, that perversely clamoured for more rather than less, he continued in defiance thereof to grow in bulk! The next resort was to that staple confection, brimstone and treacle, but which, though finally administered four times a day, seemed to operate in a contrary direction to that intended, even being anticipated with a keen relish by the patient. Tight bandages had been thought of, but too late to be needed, his garments by this time having become so tight that, as they could not be got off without difficulty, it was decided to leave them on for that purpose, but, despising such obstructive artifices, first buttons flew off, then trousers split and coats rent, until at length, as no suit in the establishment would contain the expanding dimensions of the juvenile organism, the lower portion thereof was let into a sack, through a couple of holes in the bottom of which his legs protruded from the knees, whilst the upper part of his person was enveloped in one of Mr. Poundall's cast-off overcoats,—that is to say, the body thereof, the skirt being cut off. Singular enough, neither head, feet, nor hands partook of the enlargement, thereby causing Fizzle to present much the appearance of a turtle standing on his hind feet. But as the novelty wore off, so did the inquietude, especially when it was found it was not 'catching,' and occasioned nothing more than a suggestive contrast with the other juveniles, to whom it would certainly have been of advantage if some of the superabundant fat could have been transferred to their persons. One other specific, however, before his case was given up as hopeless, was tried at the suggestion of the spare rib, and which was a daily flagellation, but this, too, was discontinued at the end of a week, much to Fizzle's enjoyment, as much so as the abandonment of the treacle and brimstone had been to his sorrow, for, instead of acting as a deterrent, it was found he actually throve

on it, since it so quickened the circulation as to materially assist the gastric juices, and, had the process continued, might have brought him eventually into competition with Daddy Lambert, who just then was on exhibition at every fair around the country as 'the fat man.' The only antidote persevered in—probably because profitable—was extra short allowance; but as the craving for food was insatiable, this only drove him the oftener to the pig-barrel, the craving increasing in inverse ratio to the short allowance; rather unfortunate for the stomach, which, failing the swill tub, at times drove Fizzle to the fields, in the corners of which he might be seen at times pulling up dock roots and feasting thereon (a luxury, by the by, indulged in even at Grumbleby), or grubbing up pig-nuts with a stick, a still greater luxury.

Time grew apace, and so did Fizzle, to the admiration of the country boys around, whose delight was to hang round the premises to catch a sight of the 'fat un,' and on every opportunity to stick pins into him; or pinch him to ascertain if he could feel, or whether he was only blown up like a bladder, and they could let the wind out.

As the school prospects did not improve, Mr. Poundall became possessed of an idea that it might possibly prove more lucrative to turn showman, and as there was a fat lady as well as a fat man, to put the fat boy in the roll, but before the idea had matured, fortune, in her usual fickle mode, interfered, and prevented its further consideration.

The season had just come round when the cutaneous complaints common to these seminaries usually made their appearance, in part, no doubt, attributable to the dietary, which, if it added nothing to the flesh, did to the cuticle. As it developed itself amongst Mr. Poundall's small charge with great virulence (Fizzle alone excepted), it necessitated a more than usual application of the irritating ointment in general use on such occasions, the result of which was that, what with the severe rubbing in by Mr. and Mrs. Poundall, and the counter scratching by the young gentlemen themselves, the little watery pustules soon disappeared, leaving their bodies almost bare of skin, and rendering their clothing a perfect torture. At the suggestion of Mrs. Poundall an experiment was made on Fizzle, with the hope of at length being able to reduce his corpulency, and he was accordingly placed in bed, between two of the worst cases, but, in utter defiance, the tumid mucosis declined to be affected

thereby; and thus matters stood, or rather went on, until culminating at their worst.

One evening, just as Mr. and Mrs. Poundall had completed the application of the aforesaid emollient to their six pupils, on their retirement for the night, a post-chaise drove up to the door. This being a most unusual occurrence,—indeed, the only time it had occurred,—it occasioned no small commotion, and which, it may be supposed, was not decreased when, on being ushered into the parlour, the visitor announced himself as a relative of one of the boys, and that, as he had occasion to be in the neighbourhood on business, he had been requested by the parents of the youth to call and see him, which he the more readily complied with, since, having two boys of his own, he was desirous of sending them to the same select academy, should he be satisfied with what he saw. Such a proceeding was without precedent, it never having occurred at any of the seminaries, being too hazardous to encourage. Unfortunately, or, as the sequel proved, fortunately in this instance, the visitor had not awaited any encouragement, and, as a consequence, Mr. Poundall and his wife were at their wits' end, especially as it so happened, as it always does, that the specimen to be interviewed, and on which so much was at stake, was about the worst case in the establishment. What was to be done? To produce him was impossible, but how to evade it was the question. To say that he was ill would never do, as no intimation thereof had been made to his parents, and it might cause their visitor to be still more anxious to see him. Mr. Poundall had already informed the party that the boys had retired for the night, whereat he had testified some surprise, it being but a few minutes past six; but as he could not leave without seeing him, he expressed a strong desire to be conducted to his bedside, in consternation whereat, the schoolmaster had left him for a time to consult with Mrs. Poundall on the dilemma. As Mrs. Poundall was rather fertile in expedients, more than one occurred to her, but which were abandoned on account of the risk, until a happy thought passed through her sagacious noddle; whereupon, introducing herself to the stranger, she ascertained that it was upwards of twenty months since he had seen the boy. Making an excuse for the delay that would occur in waking and dressing him, she returned to her forlorn husband, and bade him follow her with all speed, and, on their way to the small dormitory into which the seven boys were crowded, three and four in a bed, informed him of

what she had just learned as to the time that had elapsed since the boy's relative had seen him, and her intention, therefore, to pass Fizzle off in his stead.

'Fizzle!' exclaimed the astonished Poundall, now not quite so satisfied of the wisdom and ingenuity for which he had hitherto given his wife credit. 'Fizzle! why, t' other lad's the thinnest, smallest lad in the school.'

'What's that to do with it?' retorted Mrs. Poundall. 'Can't boys grow?'

'Not here,' thought Mr. Poundall, but he said, 'I'm afraid not quite so much as Fizzle.' And then there was another difficulty that occurred to the master, how could he talk of home and friends, of whom he knew nothing? but which was met by his wife reminding him that he was the stupidest boy in the school, and remembered nothing, the first time in which poor Fizzle had found this to his advantage.

Arrived at his bedside, it was some minutes before they succeeded in interfering with Fizzle's somnolence, notwithstanding he was dragged from between his two bedfellows by the heels, and underwent a considerable amount of shaking, accompanied by some whacks from Mr. Poundall, but which seemed to affect the latter more than the prodigy. As, after a time, the parlour door was heard to open, the schoolmaster was despatched to the impatient relative to apologise and occupy his attention, as well as prepare him for the extraordinary vision that awaited him, whilst the mistress proceeded, with such expedition as she could under the circumstances, to prepare and tutor Master Fizzle for the occasion.

Mr. Poundall explained that Mrs. Poundall had only just succeeded in waking his young relative, who was a very sound and heavy sleeper, and that as soon as she had completed his toilet she would introduce him; and in reference to his again expressed surprise at their retiring so early, informed them that it was adopted in conformity to Aristotle's precept, or Solomon's, he forgot which, of 'early to bed and early to rise, makes a boy healthy, and wealthy, and wise,' in accordance wherewith he had himself been brought up. A little reflection might have questioned the propriety of this personal allusion, at least, if intended to illustrate the two last results. And then Mr. Poundall went on further to expatiate upon the wisdom of guardians devoting more attention than they usually did to the physical development of the young, but which was a prominent feature in the

regime of the Poundall institution, of which he would have an opportunity of judging on the appearance of his young relative, who was a specimen of the other forty odd scholars, and the equal of whom he challenged any rival institution to produce. With such and other advantages, to be obtained only at his renowned academy, Mr. Poundall went on to prepare his visitor for the object about to be exhibited for his inspection, as well as to occupy his attention whilst his wife was now frantically metamorphosing Fizzle into the stranger's nephew, for such was the relationship she had settled in her mind he held, or rather the boy whom he was to represent, and accordingly tutored him to address the stranger as uncle, a term that at once commended itself to Fizzle, for the reason before stated. A pair of knee breeches appertaining to her husband, after vainly attempting to utilize, was abandoned, as also were his tailed coats, and for a time Mrs. Poundall was fairly put to it, when it occurred to her that, under the circumstances, it would not be inappropriate to make his *entrée* in bed costume, and, instantly following out the idea, it was not long before Master Fizzle was habited in Mrs. Poundall's night-gown, with one of her husband's night-caps for his head-gear, and, thus caparisoned, the monstrosity was led by the hand down to the parlour. Whilst engaged in these preparations, the schoolmistress had instructed the boy how to conduct himself, dwelling especially on the mode of salutation on his first entry, and impressing on him to confine himself to the monosyllables yes and no in reply to all questions, except when repeating her words, to do which correctly he was to look at her, and, by way of enforcing these directions, he was threatened with divers pains and penalties at the hand of Mr. Poundall on any deviation therefrom.

Mr. Poundall was in the act of rising, at the request of the visitor, to ascertain if Mrs. Poundall had also gone to bed in compliance with the philosophical theory propounded by her husband, when that lady opened the door and ushered in the pseudo nephew, whose ghostly investiture appeared to create mutual astonishment, and affect both gentlemen rather ludicrously; a glance, however, at his chaperone instantly composed Mr. Poundall, whilst the risible tendency of the other as quickly subsided on hearing the schoolmistress direct the mass of flesh to 'go and kiss his uncle.'

Fizzle raised his head, and, looking across the room, his eyes fell on Mr. Poundall, who smiled by way of encouragement. Fizzle

grinned from ear to ear, and then looked up at the schoolmistress, who repeated her directions to go over and kiss his uncle; whereupon, holding up his night-dress above his knees, thereby exhibiting his enormous legs, he waddled over to the schoolmaster, and held out his arms and puckered his lips. Mr. Poundall concluded that, acting under instructions, the boy's ardent regard was thus in the first place to be voluntarily, as it were, exhibited towards himself, by way of impressing the uncle. In admiration, therefore, of his wife's sagacity, he stooped for the proffered salute, when, with unwonted fervour, the little monster threw his arms around his neck, and, poising his whole weight thereon, in a second the schoolmaster was dragged to the ground, and in the struggle that ensued, still clinging with desperate energy, he had well nigh throttled him, before (sufficiently recovered from their fright to render assistance) Mrs. Poundall and the 'uncle' came to his rescue, and succeeded by main force in extricating her liege lord from his perilous position. As soon as the schoolmaster had regained his equilibrium and his wind, regardless of the presence of the relative, he was about to expostulate in no measured language against this (presumed) portion of the programme, but, before he had time to utter a word, was prevented by a new catastrophe. Fizzle, finding no attention was paid to his prostrate person, and unable to rise without assistance, whilst the schoolmaster was engrossing the attention of the other two, rolled over and over until his motion was arrested by the legs of the centre table, when, clutching at one with both hands, he essayed to haul himself up thereby; but as that ancient piece of furniture had reached the period when it was more ornamental than otherwise, it was unable to sustain a weight that would have proved the strength of a much more stable article, and, as a consequence, in imitation of the schoolmaster, it yielded to the operation, and capsized, and Fizzle with it, but this time Fizzle undermost. With the exception of the emission of a guttural croak, much resembling that of a bull-frog, as the corner of the table fell and rested on his capacious stomach, no other effect was produced on the live chattel.

It required no small amount of self-repression to stay the incensed Mrs. Poundall from making a descent upon the ill-starred youth, as he lay prostrate on his back, and which the presence of the stranger alone enabled her to exert. As for the schoolmaster, still panting from the efforts of his mishap, he was not quite sure whether he was not under a temporary hallucina-

tion, utterly at a loss to comprehend the meaning of it all, or to understand why on earth Mrs. Poundall had instructed the boy to proceed in so extraordinary a manner; and it was not until summoned by the dulcet voice of the latter, that he began to realize that it was not an illusion, and thereupon cautiously advanced to assist in raising the table, now minus a leg, and which had therefore to be propped up by a chair, and assisted to gather up the few articles scattered about the room. In the meantime, young avoirdupois, relieved of the superincumbent weight, rolled himself to the other side of the room, where, in raising himself, he had all but repeated his last feat, as he grasped the heavy side-table, in utilizing it to aid in regaining an upright position.

As speedily as possible, and with as much address as she was master of, Mrs. Poundall, with many apologies, managed to restore order, and, without encouraging any renewed attempt on his astounded relative, she desired Fizzle to be seated where he was, contenting herself by directing that individual to ask his uncle how he did.

'Bless me!' said the stranger, 'what does all this mean?'

Without affording time for the schoolmaster to reply, Mrs. Poundall again expressed her regret at the unfortunate mishap, but went on to explain that the dear little fellow had always been so full of his tricks since he entered the school, that he was the amusement as well as torment of the whole house; but they feared they would have to put some restraint on him, though the difficulty was how to do it without ruffling his sweet disposition, that displayed itself so funnily at times, especially in the tumbling way.

During this deprecatory address the gentleman had been eyeing the specimen with some suspicion as to its being anything human, and then, as Mrs. Poundall concluded, in reference to his amusing propensities inquired 'if it ever stood on its head?'

'I don't remember seeing him, Poundy; did you?'

'No, dear, excepting that morning that he was discovered head foremost in the pig-barrel, but then I think he'd over-balanced himself.'

'Pig-barrel!' observed the visitor, again eyeing him all over, his suspicion increased by the remark, that the creature before him bore a greater affinity to the porcine family than to anything human.

'I think he was trying to'— Mr. Poundall was arrested in the completion of his sentence by the demonstrative action of Mrs.

Poundall, who added, 'stand on his head on the rim, and fell in head foremost, but Mr. Poundall's given orders to have it covered in future.'

The visitor took another survey of the little animal, and then, addressing the schoolmistress, remarked, 'You don't mean to say, ma'am, that's my nephew, that I remember a thin small urchin, and that his mother used to say when he was born could be put into a pint-pot.'

At this remark Mrs. Poundall and her husband affected to be tickled, and laughed heartily.

'What's your name, boy?' said the stranger, by way of satisfying himself.

'Fizzle,' grunted the lad.

'Fizzle!' exclaimed the stranger in astonishment.

'O dear!' said Mrs. Poundall, 'that's what the boys call him. Johnny, dear, go over to your uncle;' whereupon the oleaginous entity commenced an uneasy movement across the room, and then stopped short.

'Do you remember me?' said the uncle.

Fizzle looked at him, and grunted 'No.'

'Eh!' interposed Mrs. Poundall, 'don't you remember this gentleman?'

Fizzle looked at her, and then grunted 'Yes.'

'Oh, you do! Who am I?'

Fizzle looked at him, and then at Mrs. Poundall. 'Why, surely you haven't forgot your uncle?' suggested that lady. 'Go over to him.' Fizzle looked round the room, and then resumed his waddling motion towards Mr. Poundall, who thereupon became alarmed, and, forgetting all else, jumped up and retreated behind his chair, at the same time appealing in doleful tones to his wife, exclaimed,

'My dear, do order him off!'

'Fizzle, my boy, I mean Johnny, stand still. You see the boy's a little confused, and then he's so fond of Mr. Poundall that he has come to regard him in the light of a relative, as, indeed, do all the boys, by whom he is generally termed uncle.'

The stranger did not seem at all jealous, nor in any way desirous of a closer proximity to his plethoric nephew; and as, in taking another step, that individual stood on his night-dress and tripped, he was allowed to remain undisturbed in his recumbent position, in which the next minute his heavy breathing testified he had fallen asleep. A short conversation there-

upon ensued, as to the length of time it took the establishment to get their boys into such excellent condition, of whom the stranger was assured the one before them was an ordinary specimen; and, after a few other inquiries, in order to satisfy the parents of the boy whom he had promised to visit, he took his leave, promising to convey a glowing account to the mother of the wonderful change in her son, and, as his own two boys were of the lean kind, to lose no time in forwarding them to the establishment, in order to their undergoing the same desirable metamorphosis.

The result was that not only the two boys in question were promptly despatched to the Poundall academy, but they were early followed by several others, and the school rapidly filled up as the account of the prodigy obtained notoriety; and thus, from being a source of anxiety, Fizzle rose to such importance that he was pampered with the best of food, and kept in apple-pie order, to be exhibited to the many from all quarters anxious to see the phenomenon.

But the sudden *prestige* of the Poundall institution aroused the jealousy of the elder ones, and produced a spirited competition. Many were the experiments that were made upon promising lads, whose proclivities held out a hope that they would prove a Fizzle, and which they usually did in the ordinary meaning of the word, and whereupon, from faring sumptuously every day, they returned to their ordinary fare, and found their old position additionally grievous. Fleshy boys were at a premium; but though one or two tolerable specimens were produced, Fizzle beyond all controversy carried off the palm.

Happy had it been for him had he continued to adhere to his fat, or, more correctly, had the fat continued to adhere to him, but, alas for Fizzle! without any assignable cause, and in the same unaccountable way as the accretion commenced, did it decline, and that despite every imaginable artifice to coax it to remain. It was painfully manifest that, corporeally, Master Fizzle was going the way of all flesh, and, notwithstanding an abundant supply from the cabbage-garden of bruised snails, particularly recommended from their supposed oleaginousness, and kindred dainties, finally Fizzle collapsed, and became himself again, thereby missing a brilliant career. As bad news travels fast, faster than it can be overtaken, it was not long before a very general rejoicing at the rival institutions took place, and, as the intelligence was expedited to interested quarters, the decadence in the Poundall academy was soon as perceptible and

notorious as that of the prodigy, who thereupon was visited with such marked tokens of disapproval at his perverse conduct, that it at length became intolerable, and a flight was the consequence, an event that brought him to the acquaintance of the indignant Yorkshireman under the conditions stated, and the auditory at the inn to the relation by that same personage of this interesting piece of scholastic autobiography.

At the completion of the narration a rather animated conversation ensued thereon, according to the views and bias of each individual, but which was cut short by the arrival of the stage, whereupon Mr. Kearas went out to reconnoitre, but, finding the expected boy was not among the passengers, after calling for another glass, he prepared for his return to Grumbleby.

The impending storm had taken another direction, and, as the innkeeper warned the schoolmaster, would soon 'be in his teeth,' and he feared be heavy, and come on before he got half way on his road. The thick dark clouds were already partially obscuring the moon, now in its last quarter, and as he might experience some difficulty in managing his horse, which was a high-spirited animal, the innkeeper counselled him to wait until the morning, especially moved to this advice as the indications (on Mr. Kearas trying several times unsuccessfully to mount the animal) were that he was scarcely competent to maintain his seat; but as he persisted in going, after at length gaining the saddle, he started just as some heavy drops began to fall. His hat pulled over his eyes, he soon began to betray a rather unsteady motion, now inclining to this side, and now to the other, and anon nodding forward. He had not proceeded far before the storm broke with great violence; the rain came down in torrents, and each roll of thunder and flash of lightning caused the frightened steed to shy and start, and to be reined in with difficulty, notwithstanding the extra weight.

CHAPTER LVII.

ANOTHER TIME OF WEEPING.

'WHAT'S yon?' exclaimed one of the Grumblebys whose bed was close to the end window of the first sleeping-room, and who had been tossing restlessly about, unable, probably from the close, fetid state thereof, to fall off again to sleep, from which he had been awoke a short time previously, but as no one responded, he repeated the demand, at the same time digging his elbow into his bedfellow's side.

'Oh! who's that? by jingo, if I don't'—said the assaulted boy, waking up, and about to rise in the bed to ascertain the offender, when a vivid flash of lightning, succeeded by a loud crash, apparently directly over the building, arrested him, and the next instant, in concert with his bedfellow, both dived under the bed-clothes, where they remained until, almost suffocated, they were compelled to slightly uncover their heads.

'You awake?' whispered the boy who had been aroused by his bedfellow.

'Ees; are you?' answered the other, in an equally low voice. 'My, don't it thunner! bud did ye hear that shriek afore yon?'

'No; what was 't?' said the first, drawing closer to his companion.

'I dunno; mebbe it's Ann Whittle.'

'Mebbe! she always comes in thunner an' lightnin' at night, you know!'

This allusion had reference to the old legend previously referred to, but too long to afford space to record, a source of much terror to the school.

A shrill sound, apparently of something passing hastily along the front of the premises, outside the fence, and another vivid flash, caused both boys to quickly withdraw their heads under the clothes, and tightly clutch each other, whilst a long roll of

thunder, but more distant than the first, came swelling up and passed over the building. Terrified, they remained silent until they were assured that the storm had somewhat abated. But the torrents of rain that had descended had been occasionally driven by the wind through the open window on to the faces of the sleepers in the next bed, and awoke them, and as the one nearest the window rose to close it, his attention was attracted by faint rays of light moving down the side yard. Presently, as they reached the gate, the latter was opened, and a voice was heard calling out, 'Woa, woa, coop, coop, poor fella, woa then.' The boy was about to thrust his head farther out, when a shrill cry, apparently in response to the voice, was followed by the sound of something galloping past the premises to the gateway, which afterwards slammed, and the same words were repeated, accompanied by the patting of a hand, and the approach and receding of footsteps into the stable.

As the boy returned to his bed, he was giving his comrade an account of what he had just seen and heard, when the two who first awoke put out their heads to listen, and, interrupting him, one of them asked if he had heard the strange noises, asserting it as his belief that it was that old witch.

'If you speak in that way of her,' responded his bedfellow, 'you may look out.'

'Why, what 'ud she do?' said he, partly re-covering his head.

'What? why, you'd see pretty quick; wouldn't he, Jim?'

'Ah, you be hanged! Ann Whittle!' replied the boy appealed to, and who was the one that had risen to shut the window. 'It were one of the horses got loose.'

'One o' t' horses! well, an' doan't that prove it?—doan't she allers come on horseback?'

'You get out; didn't I see Jock calling and leading her into stable?'

'Did ye?' and thereupon the two rose higher up on their bolsters; 'happen it's t' owd measter coomed home in the storm, an' Jock's letten t' mare goa when that awfu' clap coomed, an' he were trying to nab her again.'

Their further conversation was brought to a close by the noise of persons ascending and descending the centre stairs, hurrying along the passages, and out of the back door into the yard. Then there was the flickering of lights, throwing shadows up the stairway as they moved along the lower landing, and anon flashes from lanterns carried along the yard, and reflected from the wet

walls upon the bed-room windows. These were accompanied by the sound of voices, and soon carriage-wheels were heard passing through the gate, and crossing the common; after which some persons were heard talking as they re-entered the house, and presently the reflection of lights on the garden trees and bushes told that they had retired to their vigils, in the front room on the ground floor. As soon as the commotion had ceased, the two beds that lay contiguous kept up a running commentary upon the meaning of this unusual disturbance, each advancing its own theory, until, one after the other, in unison with the rest of the room, their hard breathings or nasals proclaimed they had fallen into a sleep, the sounder for its interruption.

The usual time for rising the next morning had been exceeded by more than an hour, long before which the strange proceeding of the previous night had been related to wondering audiences, and travelled into the other rooms with exaggerated variations; all more or less enhancing the interest attached to the Ann Whittle legend, and tending thenceforth to render her vagaries at 'the witching hour of night' still more a subject of terror By way of filling up the spare hour, and at the same time to evidence the impression made by the mystery of the night, here and there a boy in his shirt commenced capering and prancing and imitating the neighing of a horse, a proceeding that was not long in attracting the especial attention of others in the same fancy costume, who, arming themselves with bolsters, gave chase to the neighing bipeds, that were fortunate if they effected a timely escape by diving under a bed, or dragging off the clothes covering some more drowsy lads, who were taking advantage of the hour of grace to bottle off a further *quantum* of sleep, and, enveloping themselves therein, thereby leave the startled sleepers exposed, a too inviting substitute for the pursuing lads to be indifferent to the glorious chance.

At length the increasing turmoil was brought to an abrupt termination by the appearance of Mr. Shadd, who, as he passed through the rooms with an unusually mournful countenance, requested the boys to dress and go down-stairs without making a noise, and to put on their boots at the outer door going on to the playground. His dismal air, as he continued to pass to and fro the rooms whilst the morning's investiture took place, giving utterance to nothing more than a prolonged 'hush,' was effectual in restraining any ebullition, such as at other times could scarcely

have been repressed; and beyond a whispered comment or remark that 'something was a matter,' the rooms were noiselessly vacated.

At the school-room a renewed demand was made for the repetition of the account of the last night's adventure, and, whilst all crowded around the narrators, the latest edition did not fail to contain some additional particulars, which, though not before related, under the present mysterious aspect were considered very plausible, and in some way to account for the funereal atmosphere that hung around the Hall. Even those who had before made light of the story gave in, and without further demur received the rebuke of the chief story-teller, as he shook his head, and reproved them with the words, 'I told you so! now you see; you wouldn't believe a fellow.'

'Oh! what if Grip's sick!' exclaimed one.

'Ah, p'r'aps he's dead!' said another.

The suggestion startled the whole school, who thereupon gazed at each other with an almost painful expression, until at length, recovering, one exclaimed with a half rueful look,

'O my, uv 't wur!'

Another pause, during which a fresh survey of countenances ensued, to ascertain the effect such an event might be likely to produce. A mixture of awe and subdued hope rested on each, but the idea was too audacious to be followed up.

'P'r'aps it's owd Kearas!'

'Harken! owd Kearas! how'd it be he?'

'Why, didn't he go to Barnard yesterday? an' warn't Grippem putting us to bed? so it can't be Grip.'

The excitement and conjectures had in nowise abated, when, at a late hour, the school was summoned to breakfast. Any grief that might have been engendered by the possibility of Mr. Grippem being dead or sick was dissipated by the appearance of that worthy at his usual post, the milk tub, although, as he wore the same solemn look as his junior, it was possible that he might be unwell, or, as the boy who first started the surmise whispered to the one next him at the table, 'perhaps he had the belly-ache;' a complaint so common to Grumbletonians, though not generated by superfluity or repletion, as readily to suggest itself in precedence of all other.

As with the morning's toilet, the meal was partaken of with unusual order and stillness, and with the same exceptional fact, as on such former occasions, that no smaller boy's allowance was

exchanged for that of his big neighbour, or even diminished by the abstraction of the solitary whole piece that surmounted his heap of crumbs, thereby affording a munificent breakfast to the said small boy, often thereafter recalled with extra gastric spasms.

'Go out quietly,' said the usher, in a tone strangely subdued for him, and which additionally impressed the school; 'and don't any of you come near the house, but keep in the school-room till I come down.'

A few, more irrepressible than the rest, on retiring, took up a position behind a tree in the rookery, whence they hoped to be able to make such observations as would afford a clue to the mystery; but beyond the discovery that the two artisans, Tommy and Jurdy, were absent from their benches at the kitchen window, and that no person had made an appearance in the said kitchen, except once, when Milly was observed to come in for a pail of hot water, nothing further could be ascertained, and one by one the outlying pickets appeared at the school-room, without anything further to communicate to the eager crowd, than a guess at the cause of the desertion of, to them, the most attractive portion of the building. Whilst the guessing was in course, and, taken up by the school, had reached a very formidable catalogue of ills, everybody but the two teachers and Milly having been taken ill or died during the night, intelligence arrived from the gate looking on to the common, that twelve or thirteen men had just left the house, subsequently followed by another in a gig, and were crossing the common on their way back to the village. A rush to the point of observation confirmed the information, and the identification of the party in the gig as the surgeon, holding the office also of coroner, and who had halted to speak to the parson on his way to the Hall. Before they had time to renew their surmises, Mr. Grippem was announced as on his way to the school, towards which they thereupon tended with all speed, anticipating that they were about to obtain some elucidation of the strange state of affairs. As soon as the shadow made his appearance, the usher-in-chief took his post at the gubernatorial desk, and the roll was called, at the conclusion of which, amid breathless silence, Mr. Grippem opened and closed his desk very softly, as though fearful of disturbing the stillness, previously withdrawing his belcher therefrom.

Mr. Shadd, who was solemnly seated at his own post, and had been contemplating the movements of his senior, at once dived into his pockets in search of a similar article; but being, as usual,

unsuccessful, in default utilized the duster with which he had just wiped the dirt off the top of the end of the long school desk at which he was seated.

Shaking out his handkerchief, Mr. Grippem slowly and deliberately applied it to his nose. Mr. Shadd did the same. Mr. Grippem next gathered it up into a heap, a large heap, for it was a large handkerchief, and, looking at it, breathed a deep sigh. Mr. Shadd followed suite. Mr. Grippem wiped his eye,—an occurrence so unprecedented that the boys were in doubt whether to cry or laugh, but, moved by a common instinct, awaited further intimations. Mr. Shadd again followed suite, or rather exceeded, for he wiped both eyes. Mr. Grippem descended from his perch, and took a few measured strides backwards and forwards in front of the platform, his arms under his coat-tails, and his head bent towards the ground. The boys were now becoming nervously worked up. Mr. Shadd had no perch to descend from, so he contented himself with stepping out from his seat, and placed his arms under his coat-tail,—that is, was in the act of doing so, when he suddenly forbore, which evidences an amazing degree of self-possession at such a trying moment; for he recollected there was a large hole in the seat of his unmentionables, the result of too close an application to the form. Presently Mr. Grippem's perambulation came to a full stop, and he re-ascended the platform, whereupon Mr. Shadd decided to resume *his* seat. For a few seconds the usher sat on his stool, with his face buried in his handkerchief at his desk; the junior imitating this touching action by an application of the duster to the lower portion of his countenance, so as not to interfere with the look-out necessary to enable him to keep pace with his exemplar, who again rose, and, with a mournful aspect, fixed his eyes upon the press at the end of the room. After a brief pause, and a preliminary cough, he commenced, amid breathless expectancy,

'Boys, the sad event, which I need not mention, you being all aware thereof, that has cast such a gloom over your hitherto happy home, renders it necessary to forego our studies for the present.' A feeling of relief passed through the school at these consoling words, and a perceptible movement ensued. 'It is therefore my painful duty to inform you that there will be no school until after this day week.' Painful as such information might be to communicate,—that is, provided Mr. Grippem intended the adjective to apply to the cessation of their studies, but which is doubtful,—it was not productive of a corresponding

notion in his auditors. The usher's incomprehensible proceedings up to this point had affected their emotional natures to an abnormal degree of tension, but the strain had caused a collapse, and a reaction setting in, they felt ready, as of old, to acknowledge the unlooked for announcement with the exhilarating shout of 'Holiday! holiday!' accompanied by clapping of hands and stamping of feet, but before they had time to think or consider the propriety thereof, Mr. Grippem relieved them of any further desire to proceed to that extent, by immediately adding, in his ordinary harsh tone and manner,

'No boy during the week will be allowed beyond bounds, nor to be seen at the gate, nor looking over the walls into the lane, nor anywhere else; and any boy caught playing or making a noise, or known to laugh or shout, will be severely punished. When going to bed or getting up, at meals or walking about the grounds, at all times, awake or asleep, every boy is to look unhappy, to be unhappy all the week, days and nights.' These, with sundry other judicious regulations, were wound up by directions to Mr. Shadd to assist in seeing them strictly conformed to.

'Well, I'm blowed if that ain't a holiday!' exclaimed Trimmer, as Mr. Grippem withdrew from the school, followed by the shadow, and, leaping on to one of the desks and grasping the collar of his coat, he flapped his sides with his elbows, and imitated the crowing of a cock; then, assuming a very mournful tone and an elongated countenance, added, 'Coom, lads, let's all jine and blubber;' whereat, by way of commencement of the week's mourning, led on by Trimmer, a prolonged howl, combined with the most discordant variations, ensued, at the conclusion whereof the representative chanticleer was about repeating his cock-a-doodle-do, preparatory to a renewed howl, when through one of the windows he caught sight of a figure coming towards the school, and leaped on to the floor in time to escape detection by Mr Shadd, who returned to inform them that they were all to be prepared to see *him* in the afternoon, the word 'him' being uttered with a solemn emphasis.

'Golly!' exclaimed one, as the junior usher retired, 'who wants to see *him?*' 'Not aw,' said a second. 'Nor I neither,' re-echoed several, 'we've seén enow uv 'im.' 'Bud 'aht's ailin' 'im,' demanded one, ''at a fella mustn't laff?' 'Aw knaws,' exclaimed a wise one, 'they're goin' to auction us; they've made their fortins, an' are goin' to retire like owd Poundall, whose five boys we were going to buy, only Pshawby bid higher.' 'Get out!

would we have to pull down our eye-kivers for that?' 'Yes, cos 't 'll break all their hearts, an' Grip 'll die o' grief at partin' wi' us. Didn't ye see him sniggerin'?'

Whilst these and other conjectures were being made, Mape had sneaked up to the house and fell in with Milly, who commenced a relation of the real state of matters, but had not proceeded far before the lad became so excited, that, unable to await further particulars, he rushed down to the school-room, and, throwing open the door, stood on the inside, where, elevating his arms, and with extraordinary contortions of features, he vainly endeavoured to utter a word. An instant stillness pervaded the room; every boy was conscious Mape had some dire intelligence to communicate. At length he succeeded in ejaculating, 'He's deead! he's deead! he's deead! Oh, lods, he's deead!' All were transfixed, equally bereft of the power of speech, until at length a big boy approached, and threatened to punch his head if he didn't tell them who was dead. 'Him! him!' exclaimed Mape, unable to utter another syllable. At that moment another boy entered, and drew off their attention by exclaiming, in an equally excited state, 'O my! t' owd master's killed deead.' To their credit, every boy appeared shocked, and a general expression of regret ensued.

Though warder-in-chief of their prison-house, as already intimated, there were certain qualities about the old man that commended him to their boyish natures, and his faults died with him. 'Poor old master,' escaped the lips of most of the boys during those mourning days, not often unaccompanied by a tear that told hard usage had not yet entirely dried up the generous fount; every little incident in his favour—some, indeed, questionable, though not so regarded by them—was remembered and recounted with kindly words. It is not easy to drive innate goodness, marred though it is by the fall, out of the young heart; it can be done—it has been—and not seldom at these strange seminaries.

The announcement made by Mr. Shadd was now understood, and at dinner they were further informed, by Mr. Grippem himself, that they were to assemble in the school-room at two o'clock, whence, forming into procession, two by two, they were to walk up to the house, leave their boots in the entry, pass through the kitchen to the hall, and ascend the grand staircase to the chamber, and, passing round his bed, take a last look at the features of the dead schoolmaster.

At the hour named the procession was making its noiseless ascent up the stairs from which, except on their first arrival, they were ever strictly excluded, and that in other days had been trodden by the *élite* and noble from baronial halls, and even courtiers from the distant capital. There was no need now of the accustomed threat or the stern command to hush; blunted as had been their natural feelings, and coarse the external exhibition of their emotions at one another's pain or grief, those stairs had never been mounted by a more orderly or docile band than that which now wended its way to the chamber of death. Two by two, hand in hand, no word, not even a whisper, was heard; there was the twitching of a cheek, the convulsive grasp of locked hands, and the ever and anon recurring sound of breathings no longer able to be controlled, or the occasional creak of a stair tread, but nothing more; the sadness, the suddenness of the event intensified the solemnity of the occasion.

As the first couple reached the chamber door they involuntarily stopped and drew a long breath, as did almost each pair in succession, and not until beckoned in by the usher, who stood on the opposite side of the room, did they resume their advance. The subdued light caused by the darkened windows, the mute attitude of the junior Kearas, ushers, and other attendants who stood around, the linen-covered looking-glass and pictures, and sobs issuing from an adjoining room, all aided to intensify the sensation wherewith they approached the huge post bedstead, around which the long dimity curtains were closely drawn, with the exception of the one at the head, fastened back to afford an opportunity of seeing the present occupant of the bed. Urged onwards by the motions of the senior usher, an involuntary shudder passed over even the stoutest, as his eyes fell upon the livid blue of that once ruddy face, disfigured by scars, that, together with the half-closed eyes and bandaged jaws, gave a sickly, grim cast thereto. Without waiting to take a second look, the majority turned away with a quickened step, and hastened out of the room, and, hurrying down the stairs, only breathed freely as they regained the playground. That day the most of those boys received their first impressions of death in its harsher form. Since then how many have themselves been arrested, if not in the same sudden, mournful way, yet as unsparingly smitten down by the common enemy, their 'day accomplished as an hireling.' But, ere they fell in a war where there is no discharge, were they 'made glad according to the days

wherein they were afflicted, and the years wherein they saw evil?' That day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, alone can tell.

Impressive as was the occasion, its effect on lads too habituated to make light of the tender emotions, was but transient, and a day or two sufficed to restore them to their old thoughts and ways, scarcely stayed by the renewed call for their more serious deportment as they followed the corpse of the old schoolmaster to the churchyard, and there, 'under the rain and the dew,' covered him up and left him amid its silent shadows 'waiting the judgment day.'

And now another procession, the third and last in this terrible tragedy. For some reason not explained to the boys, a few days after the burial, dressed in their Sunday attire, they were marched across the common, through the town, and along the road towards the fatal spot, where, on that stormy night, the old schoolmaster had been thrown from his horse and killed. The novelty, as well as the object of such a walk, for a time acted as a check on the irregular conduct that usually attended their Sabbath peregrination to the church, and as they passed through the little town or village, their unusual appearance there on the week-day drew every inmate to the doors or windows of the houses, amongst whom the intelligence quickly spread as to the nature of their proceeding, and elicited a very general expression of approval, as well as admiration, at so marked an exhibition of the affection borne by the Grumbletonians to their late master, and, as a consequence, towards their teachers.

On leaving the town they fell out of their rank and straggled along in knots, edifying one another with speculations as to the place and the mode of coming to his end, when, after a long walk, they were suddenly brought up, and came running back or hurrying up to where the junior Kearas and his staff were observed to halt, a deep rugged part of the wayside ditch. In the course of a few minutes every one was gazing, with re-awakened feelings, at the spot pointed out as the scene of the accident, and for a time something akin to the sensations before experienced in the bed-room were revived.

An event so palpably brought to their notice, and with a portion of the details of which they were permitted to become so personally conversant, could not fail to produce a permanent impression in some direction, and the one in this case was the usual one, whereby, amplified and surrounded by a host of the

marvellous, it was handed down to posterity, *alias* new boys, as another of the traditional horrors of the Hall, most suitable for relation on retiring to bed, especially on tempestuous nights, on which occasions, at the midnight hour, it was asserted the neighing and prancing of an invisible horse had been distinctly heard, violently galloping past the building, succeeded by sounds as of horsemen in pursuit, causing by their velocity every window sash in the dormitories to rattle; and on one or two boys, stouter of nerve than the rest, venturing to peep from out the bed-clothes, they averred that a flash of light lit up the whole common, and an immensely fat figure was seen riding frantically across the same, his affrighted steed neighing as he bounded over it, always keeping in advance of half-a-dozen others, until the whole disappeared around the corner in a thunder-clap.

Nor were the rustic gossips outside less credulous or inventive of the marvellous. The spot itself, becoming known, helped to perpetuate the superstitious dread with which its neighbourhood was regarded, and soon it became an avouched fact that the sound of the clattering hoofs of an invisible steed had been heard by some belated traveller on the road, and that it always halted at the fatal ditch; but we cannot afford space to record the ghostly capers that such had been witness to, or that gained credence around.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE RUINS.

LIKE many another aspirant for arbitrary power, the full exercise whereof had hitherto been kept in check through the restraints of an uncertain interference by a lax superior, Mr. Minas Kearas found himself unexpectedly placed at the head of an autonomy which would henceforth permit of despotic sway, untrammelled by responsibility. As a result, darker days than heretofore were in store for Grumbleby, unrelieved by the fitful streaks of light that formerly struggled through the chinks that, here and there, enabled them to glint upon the murky gloom.

Unlike his father, Mr. Kearas, junior, was very irascible, and, as a consequence, his despotism only tended to aggravate his irritability. The stringency of his rule provoked new expedients to evade it, and the discovery of these evasions resulted in excessive punishments, urged thereto by the amiable Grippem, who now revelled in the unbridled exercise of birch and ferule. But the process was accumulative: increased stringency brought increased strategy; the inventive genius of the weaker was evoked to outwit the detective ability of the stronger, thus calling into play every device of the vicious nature, undeterred by any moral considerations. Nothing was forgiven, nothing condoned, except by the penalty, the 'pound of flesh.' The system of government appeared to be after the model of that of Solomon's son, as expressed in his response to the appeal of Rehoboam and the Israelites: 'Whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.'

Since Willie had been permitted to accompany Mrs. Miller to the week-night services, a change in his disposition was perceptible: the better spirit that, since his arrival at the Hall, had been, if not extinguished, at least affected by the baleful

influences of his companionship, was reasserting itself. The resentful temper, the rising self-will, and passionate paroxysms of grief, to which he had gradually surrendered himself, had asserted a supremacy over him, in default of some monitor to check or admonish, that, as he again came under better influence, startled him by the painful consciousness thereof; and, chided by the operation of the holy Paraclete, he wept at the realization of his estrangement from his childhood's teaching. But whilst he mourned, by the aid of that same Spirit he resisted, and gradually overcame, and became his former self, or rather that self bettered by his chastening.

Under the return of this influence, he more than ever indulged in his solitary musings, but now less to gratify his natural inclination than for the opportunity afforded for those communings in which, in conjunction with the teachings of the house of God, he found his only solace and comfort. As a consequence, both Mape and Milly were less frequently in his society. To the latter it was, however, rendered still more difficult by the strictness of the supervision under the revised code. Amongst other regulations was the curtailment of the liberty, hitherto enjoyed by sufferance rather than permission, of going beyond bounds; but as the plantation had always, by a sort of prescriptive right, been deemed within that 'charmed circle,' it was not included in the interdict, and the consequence was that it became so much more overrun than formerly, that Willie was compelled to abandon the copse to which he had been wont to retire, and whither Milly usually hied when desirous of an interview with him. Under such circumstances, the possibility of being with him alone, and the risk attending the effort, had confined Milly's interviews with her young friend to brief and hasty snatches at the ling stack, or, under cover of the broken wall by which she formerly came to his place of retirement, to a few moments at the archway.

A favourite resort of the young lad now was the water-side along the foot of the plantation, but oftener beyond, where, by an inner curve, the river encroached upon a field outside the bounds; any person within this curve was effectually concealed from observation by a thick growth of underwood and spreading trees, acting also as a barrier to reaching it. By ascending the boundary side, Willie had found a small opening through which he could manage to creep, and easily descend to the place, and enjoy his lonely walk undisturbed.

One sultry Saturday half-holiday, whilst strolling along this sheltered retreat, occasionally halting to watch the swift zig-zag flight of the swallow, as it skimmed backwards and forwards along the surface of the water, and presently took a longer sweep towards the bridge on the road to the village, his attention was attracted by the appearance of a town boy in that direction, crossing the river, which he appeared to do without much difficulty. As soon as the lad had gained the opposite side, Willie sauntered to the spot, and observed that, owing to the great drought, the bed of the river in patches was dry, whilst in the deeper parts, though running swiftly, the boulder stones above the surface rendered the fording thereof merely a matter of a little agility in leaping from one to the other. Scarcely knowing why, and without premeditation, he took off his shoes and stockings, and with no further mishap than once missing the mark and wetting himself to the knees, gained the other side, and climbed up the bank, where he found himself but a short distance from the ruins of the old castle, which, being on the other side of the river, was rarely visited by the Grumbletonians. Attracted by the fame thereof, as it entered largely into the traditions of the Hall, after assuring himself that there was no person in sight, he crossed the field, and, clambering over the loose fallen stones and *débris*, entered within the roofless enclosure, where he paused as his eye wandered around the building. Presently he advanced farther within, when a lizard wriggled from under a stone against which his foot stumbled, and darted to a heap of rubbish, under which it disappeared. He stopped to ascertain if there were any other indications of animate life within the lonely structure; just then the sun, which had declined to the level of the broken western walls, threw their shadow across the intervening space, casting a shade of indistinctness thereon, until it reached the opposite recesses, into which a few rays, softly entering through the jagged openings, penetrated, and momentarily lent their aid to outline their position and form. As he watched the shifting sunbeams, he was startled by the fall of a little loose mortar from the top of the higher wall, and, looking up, perceived a solitary daw, possibly from the Grumbleby rookery, perched thereon. The noise of the rattling rubbish caused the bird to cock his eye and peer down into the sombre enclosure, whereupon he discovered Willie at that moment with his gaze fixed on himself. A transient shudder and feeling of uneasiness was

experienced by the lad, as the schoolboy superstition occurred to him that a single crow in such proximity betokened the near approach of evil, and, picking up a stone, he was about to throw it at him, when, comprehending the movement, and without waiting to become a cockshy, the knowing bird uttered three derisive caws, and flew homewards to inform his mates that a Grumbleby boy had broken bounds.

Relieved of his temporary alarm, he looked round the building, until his eyes fell on the tower, and, scrambling over the interposing heaps, he commenced the ascent of what remained of the winding stairs that led up to the turret. After one or two perilous attempts, that dislodged more than one loose stone, he succeeded in reaching an embrasure which overlooked the Greta, and experienced an exhilarating thrill as he looked down on the scene below. As he gazed towards the river, he observed an object, apparently some person, crossing at the same spot the boy and himself had forded, and from which he concluded it was in ordinary use for that purpose. Higher up, to the right, he overlooked the topmost trees of the sloping wood, along which his eyes ran until he discovered the brow of the plantation at its juncture with the playground. At the foot of the plantation he traced the river to the falls, and on this side could just see the top of the high building called the jenny, or spinning mill, as it rose above the intervening hill. Along the road that led from the mills to the high road, the miller's team, laden with flour, was jogging; whilst in the field in which the old castle stood, a flock of sheep gradually approached the structure as they grazed towards it, their motions occasionally accelerated by the tinkling of the bell of the foremost. Near the one-arched bridge through which the Greta continued its sinuous way until out of sight, a few cattle had descended to slake their thirst, one or two of which had waded to their knees, and stood therein, chewing their cud. Anon the sound of the distant church bell, tolling for some departed one, recalled his thoughts, and, as he listened, he turned away from the narrow opening and lowered himself carefully to a safer stair, and soon he was going back to other scenes and the sound of other bells, until, in somnolent musings, plantation, river, mills, herds and flocks, dissolved into serpentine waters and green parks, high smoky houses and thronged streets, and there's the old bird-fancier's shop, and the old green parrot, as dirty as ever, with his chipped, jagged bill clinging to the iron bars of his cage, and

crying, like Sterne's starling, 'I can't get out,' and the last word keeps ringing in his ears until it sounds as though it was the church bell saying, 'Out, out, out;' and there's a large bed, and some one's lying in it, and as he looks the old schoolmaster rises up therefrom and clutches at him, and repeats in an unearthly tone, 'Out, out, out;' a faintness ensues, and the old man disappears, but there's the same room, and bed-hangings, and covered glass, and pictures, and attendants, and in the bed the same,—no, it's smaller, much smaller, it's his own emaciated frame,—and yet he is not in it, but hovering over it, and as he looks he is rising, rising; some beautiful shining one has taken him by the hand, and without speaking, with a radiant expression seems to iterate the words, 'Out, out;' but as he looks up his glance falls on the top of the castle wall, and he sees the old daw, and again he hears the ill-omened caw, coupled with his own name. With a shiver he started from his fitful sleep, and was in the act of stepping off the stair, when the sudden consciousness of his danger occasioned him to cling to a projection, and thereby save being dashed to pieces.

The sun was lower, and the darkness of the interior had increased, but as he turned towards the entrance he fancied he saw something move, and then it climbed on to a heap of rubbish, and a head turned slowly round, as though in search of some object. Willie instinctively drew close to the wall and crouched down, but in doing so knocked down a small loose stone, that, as it fell, caused the figure to start and look up in the direction whence it came, and Willie feared that he was discovered.

'Willie,' said a well-known voice, as the lad was crouching into an angle, 'is that you?'

The boy breathed freely and rose up, and, as she repeated her demand, exclaimed, 'Is that you, Milly?'

Without awaiting to respond, she hastened headlong over the interposing heaps, and was in the act of ascending to the stair on which he was perched, when she was arrested by his remonstrance, that her weight would bring down the crazy steps; and whereupon he cautiously descended. He had scarcely gained the last tread when she clasped him in her arms, and carried him off to the mound of rubbish near the entrance, and, after one or two demonstrative hugs, expressive of her delight at having succeeded in finding him, in answer to his inquiries informed him that the schoolmistress and her son having driven off to Barnard

Castle, she had availed herself of the opportunity to seek him, as the occasions of being in his society were now so rare. She had, however, learned from Mape, who was also in search of him, that he was not about the playgrounds, and was returning from an unsuccessful exploration through the plantation, when from the brow of the hill she saw some one crossing the river higher up, which her loving instincts told her was the object she was in search of. Without further consideration she made for the river, but, not being acquainted with the road, had experienced some difficulty in finding the spot at which he had crossed, and it was doubtless her that Willie had seen. But, on arriving at the other side, she was equally at a loss to know the direction he had taken, and, after a short deliberation, made for the mills, where, however, she learned that no boy as described had been seen. After wandering about, it had occurred to her that his love of retirement had induced him to visit the old castle, and, on arriving at the entrance, she had called him by name, which probably was what in his drowsy state had sounded as the cawing of the rook, and awoke him.

As they sat side by side, Milly's arm continued every now and again to squeeze him to her side, until, in pleading tones, he begged her to desist, 'as he couldn't bear it,' and which the short breathing and the hectic flush too painfully confirmed. Milly looked half-reproachfully into his thin, pale face,—for she never divined any other reason for the request, than that she was less beloved, and therefore that he did not care to be any nearer her heart. Her heart!—if she had any it was not worth much, so everybody seemed to say, but what there was was large enough for him, and he was wholly there,—her little idol,—too small, too young to entertain any other than a sister's love towards him, yet towards him her heart glowed intensely. And if he had none to give in return, it mattered not to her; she only asked his toleration, the liberty to love because *she* loved. She knew enough to know that 'love is not pedlar's trumpery, bought and sold.' But if Willie did not love her as he did Aunty or Mary, he could not help it,—her coarseness contrasted too disparagingly with their gentler, more winning ways, and her impulsive, impassioned mode of expression caused her to infringe too rudely on his sedate, retiring habits to inspire the same holy affection; still he liked her, preferred her even to Mape, and therefore bore as best he could her rough, ungainly manners.

Without noticing the expression of her face in response to his request, he looked vacantly through the entrance of the building into the green field without, his thoughts reverting to his brief dream, whilst Milly watched him in silence.

At length, with a long-drawn sigh he turned to her, and inquired, 'What made you want me, Milly? I was coming here to be alone.'

'Was you?' replied the girl with a disappointed air. 'Do you want me to go, then?'

'O no! I didn't mean that; now you're here, I'd like you to stay.'

Milly smiled, and was about to repeat her squeezing, but recollected, and said, 'Did you come to see *Him?* And then, following the stairway of the tower upwards with her eyes till they reached the top, she said in a lowered tone, 'Up there, I s'pose?'

The boy raised his head and looked in the same direction, above the moss-covered walls, and then into the azure sky, and, momentarily closing his eyes, responded in a solemn tone, 'Yes.'

'Did you see Him?' whispered she, involuntarily looking around the gloomy interior, some undefined idea rising in her mind in connection with the long subterranean passage alluded to in an earlier chapter, believed to lead from the castle to the distant banks of the Greta, and reputed to be barred by an iron gate in the centre, whence mysterious sounds were said to issue.

'O no, Milly, you can't see Him, but He can see you.'

The girl again looked around, and then in a low tone said, 'Hadn't we better go and sit outside?'

'What for?—I'd rather stay here. You ain't afraid, are you?'

'Ain't you? Wouldn't He hurt?'

'Hurt?—No, that He wouldn't.'

'Does He like you?'

'I don't know,' responded Willie, with a sigh; 'I'm afraid I'm not good enough.' He hung his head, and pulled up a dank weed.

'Not good—you not good!' exclaimed Milly in a rapid, questioning tone, moved by his despondent air and tone. She lowered her head to look into his face, and then, raising hers towards the top of the tower, shook her fist and shouted, 'Who says he's not good?'

Startled and shocked at what seemed to him the girl's impiety, Willie clapped his hand over her mouth, and exclaimed, 'Oh,

Milly! Milly! don't! don't! what's the matter?—that's wicked, —don't you know that's wicked?'

In an instant her defiant expression changed into one of awe, and, as she dropped her eyes on the lad, she said in an altered voice and manner, 'Is it?' And, forgetful of his former request, she drew him close to her side, and added, 'Never mind, nobody likes anybody about here,—I do, though.' Then, as she released him, continued, 'But who is He? Mayn't you tell me?'

'Who do you mean?'

'*Him* as you said was up there.' She pointed to the tower.

'Oh, Milly, don't you know?—haven't I told you before?' Then, shutting his eyes, he added in a scarcely audible voice, 'God.'

Milly closed her eyes too, and muttered, 'God.' Then opening them, she looked cautiously up at the tower. 'Is He there now?'

'He's everywhere,—and here too.'

'Is He?' rejoined Milly, and she looked furtively on each side, as though in anticipation of some visible manifestation; 'And can He hear us?'

'To be sure He can. He hears us and sees us too.'

'Let's go; I'm afeard.'

'You needn't to be. Don't you know He loves you?'

'No! no one loves me! Missus say no one could like me.'

'O yes, I like you.'

'Do you?' exclaimed Milly vehemently, unable to suppress her delight at this announcement, and she was in the act of throwing both her arms around him, when, checked by the boy's imploring countenance, she seized his two hands instead, and pressed them to her bosom, and then to her lips. 'Do you, Willie dear? And so do I;' and again she kissed his hands, and then resumed, 'But why 'ud *He* like me?'

'Because—because'—Willie was at a loss for a reason—'because He does.'

'Then why don't He like you?'

'Because I'm afraid I've not been good enough since I've been down here.'

'Not good enough? Then I don't want Him to like me.'

'Oh, Milly, that's wicked, I tell you! it's bad to say those things. You mustn't.'

'Then why don't He like you?' Willie hesitated to consider the best way of conveying his meaning, but before he had time to

arrange his ideas she let go his hands, and exclaimed in a tone of triumph, 'Oh, I forgot! I've got it!' and thereupon drew out of her pocket a handful of crushed papers, which she straightened out on her lap. 'The letter's among them writings.'

'What letter?' exclaimed the boy, puzzled by this abrupt proceeding.

'Why, the letter you wanted. Don't you mind one time in the plantation you said I was to get a letter that you said that red thing was put on to keep it shut.'

'O yes, I remember! And did you get it?'

'Yes; and that's what, besides, made me want to see you. An't you glad now I came?'

'That I am; and I'm ever so much obliged. You *are* a good gal, Milly.' Milly was just going off again into a demonstrative response at language she was so unaccustomed to hear, but a deprecatory look from the boy stayed her, and with a hearty laugh she said she 'wasn't going to,' and then directed his attention to the papers, which she informed him she had 'saamed all up,' because she did not know which was his, and explained the way in which they had come into her possession, and which was in this wise:—

A few days subsequent to the burial of the schoolmaster, as Mr. Kearas, junior, and his mother were seated at the table in the front room, examining the papers of their deceased relative, Milly, who happened to be engaged in some household duty in the hall, was attracted by overhearing Wilton's name mentioned, and as the door was on the jar she listened, and heard the remark that a letter, that the junior schoolmaster had just perused, was one that he supposed had been kept back by the elder Kearas, and could be burnt with several other papers that were thrown aside. Of these papers she had obtained possession, but, not being proficient in writing, she had brought the whole to Willie, in order to his selection of the one appertaining to himself. This he was not long in accomplishing, and with some excitement read the contents of Frendzburgh's letter to himself, which, as we have seen, had been enclosed in the one to Nanny. Milly was little less excited than the boy, as he read it to her more than once. At first she burst into a loud laugh as he read the words, 'Remember me to Milly,' and jumped up and clapped her hands, it sounded so droll. 'She mentioned in a letter!—she never heard the like!' Then a doubt entered her mind, and she got him to read it again, and as he did so watched

him very closely to see if he was not 'making it up out of his own head,' and insisted on his showing her each word as he read it. Willie's heart, too, was full; he had not then been forgotten by the only one with whom he had become acquainted since he left home, that he cared to be remembered by. For the moment all the past of sorrow was gone, and with mutual gladness of heart the two discoursed on the worth and goodness of the writer, each recalling something said or done that had made its impression for good, and as they did so, found their own hearts drawing closer to one another.

'Oh!' exclaimed Milly, 'I'd almost forgot. Here's something else, about me.' She drew from her bosom a sheet of foolscap, folded into four. 'There, that's about me.'

'Where did you get it?' replied Willie, as he folded up Frendzburgh's letter, and deposited it between the cloth and lining of his waistcoat.

She looked up to the top of the tower, apprehensive, from Willie's preceding account, that she might be overheard, and then whispered in his ear, 'Out of his desk.'

The boy drew back, and with a frown responded, 'Out of the master's?' She nodded. 'In the room?' She nodded again. 'That's stealing.'

'Stealing! Ain't it mine?'

'I don't know.'

'Well, look and tell me.' Not quite sure he was doing right, he took the paper from her hand and opened it, whilst the girl watched him with great eagerness. 'Why don't you read it out to me?' she demanded, after waiting a few seconds. 'Can't you read writing?'

'Yes, but not this kind. We don't write that way in school.'

Unfortunately, for some reason or other not very usual, except on parchment, the contents were in 'German text,' and the boy was unable to decipher it. Milly was disappointed, and took the document back.

'Perhaps that isn't the right paper?' suggested the boy.

'O yes, it is! I heard him say it was about me, and I saw through the crack of the door where he put it in the corner of the desk. He looked at the back, after he'd folded it up, and said, "That's Milly's agreement, we must keep that."'

'Let me see again,' said Willie; and, after folding the paper he read, in plain, legible letters, beneath a German text endorsement, 'Doctor Scarr's agreement with myself about Milly.'

'There, didn't I tell ye so? Ain't I Milly?'

'Did Dr. Scarr send you here too?' demanded Willie with surprise.

'I don't know who sent me. I s'pose somebody did as didn't care for me.'

'Hadn't you better put it back again?' remarked the boy, as he handed her the paper again.

'No; it's mine. Ain't I Milly?' and, snatching it out of his hand, she thrust it back in her bosom.

The sound of a shepherd dog barking, and the hurrying past the entrance to the ruins of the flock of sheep, caused them to remember it was time they returned to the school grounds, and on reaching the other side of the river they separated, lest, falling in with any straggler from the Hall, it should be known that they had been together. Willie had not proceeded many steps alone before he felt himself trembling with a chilliness that rendered his progress difficult; the damp and draught of the ruins had evidently affected his delicate frame. Clutching at the boughs and saplings on his way, he contrived to reach the top of the ascent, where he threw himself down to recover before entering the rookery. Presently he made an effort to rise, but before he could gain his feet his head became giddy and he sank to the ground, though not before he was caught sight of by Harfagr, who had been seeking him in every nook and corner, and was returning under the expectation of finding him by this time on the grounds. As he fell to the earth, Mape ran up and seized him by the arm, and exclaimed in a jocular tone,

'Tha needn't t' skulk; aw's gotten tha nah; wha'st ben smuggin', lod?' but instantly stopped his hectoring as he became sensible something was wrong with him, and, changing his tone as he seated himself by his side, inquired, 'Woollie, 'aht's ailin' tha?' A slight shivering was the only response. Mape regarded him silently; then raising him to a sitting posture, bade him lean his head on his shoulder, whilst he supported him with his arm round his back. 'Tha'rt doan oop, tha'st ben too far; 'aht's matter? aht sick, lod?'

'I think I must be; I feel strange,' replied the boy faintly. Mape again sat silent, but the twitchings of his face told the sorrowful nature of his musings, as he occasionally turned his glance upon the boy. After a short pause, he demanded if he was better, and if so, to let him carry him down to the schoolroom.

'I'll soon be; wait a little, and I'll walk down. I don't want the boys to laugh at me, and call me "molly cot."'

'Ca' tha mocut! Uv they do, an' aw'm fit, aw'll put ma neiv in thur gab.' A further pause ensued; presently the boy raised his head and sighed.

'I think I'm better now; p'r'aps we'd better go.' Mape jumped up and assisted his friend to rise; the exertion caused the blood again to flow to his head, and Willie staggered. Mape held on to him and led him to the wall, against which he rested for a brief space, and then got him over to the other side, into the rookery, whence they proceeded slowly to the school. As they wended their way, Harfagr kept up an incessant jargon, in order to avoid attracting attention, occasionally only steadying his friend when he fancied such aid was required.

Seated at the further end of the room, under cover of the teacher's desk, he did not attract attention, and, watched by Harfagr, who contrived to decoy away any boy who approached too near, it was not long before he felt himself able to raise his head from the desk and converse with his friend, in the course of which he recollected the letter he had just been put in possession of.

'Mape,' said he, 'I forgot Frendzburgh told me to give his regards to you.' Harfagr jumped up from his seat, and with a look of expectancy surveyed him for an instant or two, until, impatient at the fancied delay, he exclaimed,

'An' tha nivver thought t' gie't ma afore nah!'

'Give you what?' inquired the boy, taken aback by the other's remark.

''At as he tel't tha t' gie ma.'

'Oh, you don't understand. I've got a letter from him, and he says in it I am to tell you he remembers you.'

'Hey! Noa, ded he tho'? uv 'at doan't bang all aw iver heard;' and Mape fairly danced with joy.

That night, as Harfagr assisted his young friend to bed, and threw his bony arm around his hot frame, he lay listening to his short, quick breathings until long after the others had fallen asleep, each time that he dozed off himself aroused by the convulsive twitchings or stifled cry of his little bedfellow.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE STORE-ROOM AGAIN.

THE privileged bed in the old store-room, specially reserved for new boys, was once more tenanted. But this time its tenant was an old boy, that is, if we adopt the Grumbleby mode of reckoning, which conferred that distinction on all boys who had gone through the prescribed summary process of initiation into its classic arena, and which ordinarily occupied between two and three weeks.

This distinction was quite observable on the night subsequent to the events recorded in the preceding chapter, in the unusual circumstance that those boys who slept in the dormitories beyond, as they retired to bed, instead of tarrying at the door, according to custom, when the room was occupied by a new arrival, in order to make certain whining or imperious demands on the presumed well-plenished treasury within, at the instant they reached the landing ceased their precedent antics, and with a whispered request to the lads behind to 'stop that,' stepped on tip-toe until they gained the next room, when they resumed their by-play.

As Mape Harfagr, now the only occupant of his bed, lay with his eyes wide open, gazing through the doorway on to the landing, he observed the flicker of a light ascending the stairway, and presently recognised the slow, heavy tread of the schoolmistress, as she stepped on to the top stair, and entered the store-room, but in less than a minute returned, closed the door, and descended. The appearance of the dim light, accompanied by the movement on the reputed haunted stairs, caused the immediate disappearance under the bed-clothes of the heads of such as were not yet asleep, and, as a consequence, soon left Mape the only one awake.

Cautiously sliding out of his bed on to the floor, Mape crept

on all fours until he reached the landing, and then rose up and leaned over the banisters and listened. All was quiet below, the only sounds being the usual ones proceeding from the sleepers in the adjacent rooms. Thereupon he turned towards the store-room and gently raised the latch, but had only just opened the door a few inches, when he was arrested by what sounded like a muffled voice. Letting go the thumb latch, it made a click that sent a tremor through his frame, and he stepped back to listen lest it had attracted attention. But as nothing further was heard, with bated breath he returned to the partly opened door, and paused to hearken: a low moan, accompanied by heavy breathing, was the only indication of any one's presence within. He pushed the door open wide enough to enter, and approached the bed. The moonlight, admitted by the curtainless window, fell upon the sleeper, and Mape stood for some minutes silently watching the flushed cheeks of his young friend, Willie Wilton. After awhile he seated himself on the large chest that stood at the window at the bed-head, and leaned his face on his two hands, with his elbows on his knees, occasionally raising his head, disturbed by the tossing of the feverish boy. Once he rose to close the door, and as he resumed his seat ventured to look around the room, but as he did so he experienced some uneasiness, for as he gazed, the shadows of the varied articles therein, on which the rising moon shone, were taking new shapes, that his fears transformed into projecting heads and threatening hands, but from the contemplation whereof his attention was continually diverted by the restless movements of the sick boy.

Impatient at his continued drowsiness, he at last rose and stood over him, under the hope that, as his eyes, from weakness, were only partially closed, he might see him. But as this expectation was not realized, he was in the act of stooping to whisper in his ear, when he thought he heard a hand, as though feeling for the latch, on the outside of the door. In an instant he darted under the bed, striking the side thereof with his head, which disturbed the boy, and caused him to open his eyes. The door gradually opened and shut, and some one stole on tip-toe to the bed. By the rustling sound of the garments, Harfagr made out that it was a female, and visions of Ann Whittle rose to his alarmed mind. In another second he would have crept out and bolted, but that the apparition dropped her apron, which had been carefully held round a candle to prevent it shining on her way up, and revealed Milly, in time to withdraw his head and

stay his intention. The girl laid the light down on the chest, and turned to Willie, who looked up and smiled, and said in a feeble tone, 'Is that you, Milly? was it you that knocked the bed-post?' and then, throwing his arms outside the clothes, asked for a drink of water. Mape had nearly forgotten himself, and hastened from his hiding-place to comply with the boy's request, when a vague idea of its effect both on the patient and girl timely occurred to him, and he refrained.

Milly stooped down and kissed the boy's brow, and made a few inquiries as to how he felt; then, as she placed his exposed arms under the clothes, informed him that Mrs. Kearas had been in the room to see if he was awake, preparatory to giving him his medicine, but, as he was asleep, had sent her up to see, and that she would go back for the medicine, and bring him a drink at the same time.

She had scarcely left the room before Mape crawled out at the foot of the bed, not, however, without repeating the blow, that made the invalid start, and ask faintly, 'Who was that?' As he approached, rubbing his occiput, he stooped down by his side, and in a half-audible voice said,

'Et's me, Woollie; aht better? tha'lt be well t' morn, woan't thee?' and then his eyes, suffused from the effect of the dual blow, perhaps from other causes, looked piercingly into the boy's eyes. Willie shook his head gently. 'Nah, doan't tha be shaking thi heead; tha wool, aw knaw 't.' This was uttered with an air of authority that seemed to say he had settled that.

'Mape, I'll never be well again,' replied the lad, as he closed his eyes and turned his head on the pillow towards him.

Mape was dazed, and at a loss what to say. Collecting himself, he exclaimed, 'Aht tha ony waur, then? Tommy'll gie tha summat 'at 'll soon sot tha oop agen, an' aw'll—aw'll'— He wanted to name something that he'd do too to make him well, but could not think of anything.

'Mape,' said Willie, as he opened his eyes and reached his hand to the sorrowing lad, who grasped it with an energy that made the blood pulsate through the boy's veins even quicker than it was doing, 'you can't do anything. You've done your best for me,—all you could while you were able; you can't do any more now.'

'Noa, Woolton, doan't tha say 'aht, nah, cos aw knaw aw an't doan nowt, bud aw wool.'

'Listen, Mape, for I can't talk much.' Harfagr regarded him

with a painful expression, still retaining his hold of the hot, dry hand, and hearkened. 'It isn't much that any one can do here for anybody, but you've done what you could for me.'

'Tha may say yon,' interrupted the lad, forgetful of the request to be silent.

'Mape, I want you to promise me that you'll never forget those things we've talked over sometimes.'

'Nivver, aw promise ye!' said the impulsive youth; 'an' whan tha'rt well, aw'll'—

'Won't you let me speak?' said the little lad in an appealing tone.

'Aw's forgotten, bud aw woan't noa moar.'

'And you'll not say any bad words, nor fight, will you, Mape?'

He looked at Willie, not quite certain that he was expected to reply, then with some hesitancy remarked, 'Wall, aw woan't uv they lev tha an' me aloan.'

'Oh, Mape, you don't understand; you mustn't do it at all, and when I'm gone'—

'Whar's t' gooin', Woollie,—hoam?' interrupted the boy, with surprise, and then, remembering the injunction to listen, he let go his hand, and, pressing both his own over his mouth, exclaimed, 'Noa, begow! aw'm fearfu' sorry; aw didn't mean 't, bud aw'll no spaik agen, aw swear.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Willie, with a painful expression, and poor Mape, conscious of this unintentional slip, sunk abashed on the chest. After a short pause the little invalid resumed, 'Mape, come close.' Harfagr rose, and stood again by his bedside. 'When I'm gone, and you've no one to care for you, remember there's somebody does,—Jesus, who loved you so as to die for you,—and *He'll* never forsake you; and then by and by we shall both meet up there, where He is,'—Mape followed the direction in which the boy's finger pointed with awe, but imperfectly comprehending his meaning,—'and you must not take on about me when I'm gone. I'm going to a happier, better place than this.'

Mape thought he could not well find a worse, but, not quite clear as to his meaning, inquired 'if he might ask this one question, and he wouldn't ask no more,—where was he going?'

'To die and go to heaven.'

Mape saw it all now, and the tears coursed fast down his bronzed cheeks, as he continued to wipe them off with both hands, and, after one or two ineffectual attempts, he sobbed out,

'Ar! ar! Woollie! 'aht mak's tha talk soa; tha'lt mak' ma roar uv tha carrys on loike 'aht. Tha munno dee; uv tha do, ut'll be deeathblow t' me, an' aw'll dee too.'

'Hush!' said Willie, too exhausted to add more; and the poor stricken fellow sank down and buried his face in the bed-clothes to smother his cries. Slightly recovered, he was about to put a question to the sick boy, when, as previously, the movement of a hand on the door arrested him, and he had barely time to reach it, so as to be sheltered thereby on its opening, as Milly entered with a mug of cool water, procured fresh from the beck. But he was too late, and, as the girl turned quickly to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, there, crouched in the corner, she discovered poor Mape, habited in nothing but a shirt, whose abbreviated length exhibited an undue proportion of limbs. With natural instinct, just enough to suggest doubts as to the propriety of his appearance in such costume before a young lady, Mape dropped upon his haunches, and wriggled himself backwards to the door sill, and then turned tail and fled.

To say that Milly was put to the blush by this gratuitous display of the length and breadth of Mape's spindles (they could scarcely be designated legs), would be a reflection on the success of the Grumbleby training. Brought up in near proximity to so many and such reckless boys, she had need of a countenance of brass. But though she did not blush, a tinge of colour mounted to her cheeks, occasioned by the 'scare' he gave her, and in the vexation of the instant she threw the tin of water after the retreating lad, but whose celerity saved him from any damage therefrom. Happily she had brought a reserve of the fluid in a jug, and, after closing the door, raised the sick boy sufficiently to enable him to slake his burning thirst, at the conclusion of which she gave him his medicine, and replaced his head on the pillow, adjusted the clothes, and put back his hair with her fingers, rewarded by a faint smile and the assertion that she was kind.

For a time Willie lay with his eyes closed, and Milly sat down on the chest and watched him. At length, looking up towards her, he observed her examining his dilapidated apparel that lay on the ground at the foot of the bed.

'Are you still here, Milly?' said he. 'You'll be tired. You'd better go to bed.'

'No, I shan't. Do you want me to go?' Then, throwing

down his garments, she exclaimed, 'I'm going to see if I can't find some better clothes for you beside them old rags.' With that she mounted a tier of boxes, and, reaching to the upper shelf, was about to pull down a pile of clothing, when Willie begged her to desist, as he would never want them.

'Yes, you will. I'm going to dress you to-morrow, and carry you down to the side of the river every day. That'll soon make you well, won't it?'

At that moment Willie's eyes lighted up with an expression of delight, for they had fallen on a well-recognised object on the shelf, by the side of the clothing; he beckoned the girl with his finger, and, as she stooped her head, asked,

'Milly, could you get down that trunk and bring it here? It's mine.'

No sooner said than done, though somewhat at the risk of bringing down another, on the top thereof, upon her head. She placed it on the chest, which she lugged round close to the bed, and opened the lid. Willie's face glowed with animation, as, one after the other, Milly took out the few articles that had not been abstracted therefrom; the sight of which, as she laid them on the coverlet, sent a thrill through his frame.

'Stop, Milly; let me look at that. O my! that's my dear little knife, that Mr. Grumphy gave me on my birthday once.'

It was a small, brown, rough-handled penknife, purchased at the Exchange for the purpose alluded to. As he said this, he continued to gaze on it until the tears blinded his eyes, for there came rushing to his remembrance such pleasant memories: there he was, seated on the assistant's knee, who had just echoed Aunty's fervent wish, accompanied by several kisses, for 'many happy returns of the day.' Many such returns? There *had* been two or three subsequent thereto, but what would he have given at that moment could he have enjoyed but one more! How vain had been the wish! for had not, since then, 'the days of the years of his life,' during his short pilgrimage, 'been few and evil?' And would the happier never return?—so bright, so glad, so joyous, heightened in their present contemplation, to an excess beyond reality, by the dark, cheerless contrast of his late days. Nothing left but the memory thereof! But he is luxuriating in that, and sees himself joggling on the assistant's knee, or, as he pulls himself on to his feet upon the said knee, now thrusting his chubby hand into the side pocket of his coat, now into both pockets of his waistcoat, and finally making

a desperate but vain attempt to find an entrance into the pocket of his trousers, in search of the pretty little something that Aunty intimates is to be found in one of them; whilst, with feigned displeasure, Mr. Grumphy is making a feeble resistance, and wants to know how any one dares put his hand into his pocket; and threatens to call in a Robin Redbreast, as he terms the Bow Street officer, to take him before Sir Richard Birnie for attempting to pick his pocket. Whereupon, unable any longer to restrain herself, Mary Jones, in a state of excitement, rushes to Willie's help, exclaiming that she knows where it is, and endeavours to comply with the boy's request to 'hold his hands;' and a struggle ensues, in the midst of which, as Mr. Grumphy strives to save himself from being upset, Willie triumphantly brings out of his coat tail pocket the identical penknife, and runs to the window, followed by Mary, shouting, 'I've got it, I've got it! and oh, Aunty, isn't it beautiful?' And then Mary breaks her thumb nail as she makes an unsuccessful effort to open it. Meanwhile the complaisant Mr. Grumphy has slipped out of the room, with the intention of going to the shop, lest by a longer stay he should surrender himself too much to the influence that could alone melt that obdurate heart, satisfied with this transient gleam emanating from the small amount of happiness he had been the occasion of. But, as he emerges from the street door, returns an instant, in response to the loud calls of Willie, to hear the iterated 'Thank you, Mr. Grumphy,' vociferated from the head of the stairs, the boy having been reminded by Aunt Fanny that he had not done so. But the sick boy is recalled from these thoughts, as his eye rests on a Watts' hymn-book, and then on a small Bible, the former the gift of Miss Austen at the same time as the penknife, the latter placed by the same loving hand in the corner of his trunk, that sorrowful morning when he left her happy home. As Milly placed it in his hand, a rush of emotions occasioned a faintness, and he leaned back on the pillow, and gazed a few seconds in the girl's face, and his mind, overcome by the exertion he had been making, wandered, and he exclaimed, 'I don't want it, Aunty,—keep it. I won't go; oh, it's a dreadful place! Hold me, Mary, hold me! Mary—Mary—Mary!'

The last words were repeated in so high a key, that, alarmed at his incoherency, Milly caught hold of his arm, and shook him, and cried, 'Hush! they'll hear you. What's a matter? What do you see?' and she looked tremblingly around the room.

'Is Aunty gone, and Mary?' said the boy, gradually recovering.

'Did you see them?' replied Milly, with increased alarm, under the full conviction that the two persons named had mysteriously appeared to him.

'Who?' said Willie. 'Was I raving, Milly? I suppose I was. O dear! Milly, will you read me a verse or two out of that good Book, where you see the leaf turned down?'

She took the Bible, and, opening it at the place indicated, began at the first verse at the top of the page, spelling the longer words as she read on: 'And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them, and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.'

'Isn't that beautiful?' interposed Willie. 'How the dear Jesus loves us,—you and me! Doesn't He?'

'Does He?' replied Milly, endeavouring to reconcile their present lot with this apparent hypothetical statement, but unable to do so, added, 'Then if He does, why does He leave us here?'

'He didn't send us here, Milly.'

'But doesn't He know we're here?' The boy assented. 'Then, if He loves us, He ought to send for us.'

'He is going to'— Willie hesitated, then, correcting himself, said, 'I think He's going to send for me.'

'Is He? That's fearfu' good for you; but what about me?'

'Some day, if you're good, He'll take you too. But I think you don't quite understand.'

'Don't I? I'm too big, I s'pose, to be a child?'

'O no! not to be a child of God. But, Milly, there's something to be done first. You know you're a sinner?'

'Am I? Are you?' Willie bowed his head. 'No, you an't; cos you an't miserable, and that's what all on us say every Sunday after the parson,—"Have mercy on us miserable sinners;" and I'm miserable, I know that, so I must be a sinner.'

'Milly, everybody is a sinner; but then, you know, I've told

you how Christ died for sinners, and if we're sorry, and want to be forgiven, God will forgive us for Christ's sake. He says in that Book, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." But we must come; for He won't give rest to any one that don't go to Him and ask Him; but if we go believing His word, and in the Saviour that He died for us, He will make us happy, and we'll love Him so.'

The girl sat listening, though not comprehending the boy's meaning, but as he ceased speaking she asked, 'Do you love Him?'

His eyes kindled with emotion, as, raising them towards the window, he said with fervency, 'Dear Jesus, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

Milly turned towards the window, as though expecting to see some one thereat, and, without taking her eyes off, inquired in a low tone, 'When's He coming for you?' A slight rattle of the casement by a passing wind caused her to start, and, rising quickly from the chest, she demanded, 'Is He coming now?'

'Milly, I mean I'm going to die.'

'No, you ain't; the doctor's coming to-morrow, and he'll make you all right. And then, if He comes that you speak of, will you go?'

The boy made no response, his gaze having fallen on the articles on the bed taken from the trunk.

'Milly, I want you to give that penknife to Mape, and tell him it's a keepsake from me.'

The girl took up the knife and put it into her pocket, but probably recalling his words in reference to the document that she had abstracted from the schoolmaster's writing-desk, she remarked, 'Isn't that stealing?'

'No; that's mine—my own,—given to me by a friend. You'll give it to him, won't you?' She nodded her acquiescence. 'And please put the Bible under my head; and when I'm gone it's yours, Milly. Mind, I give it to you; and you'll read it,—won't you? and then you'll think of me sometimes, and what I have told you?' As he said this he held out his attenuated hand, which the girl grasped, but was unable to reply, and anon the tears were standing in her eyes. 'You won't fret,' continued he, feebly returning the pressure of her hand, as the big drops now fell on the pillow. 'A little while,—it's only a little while,—and you will come too. There's room up there for us all; and oh! it's a beautiful, happy place! Kneel down,—will you? Can you pray?' She shook her head. 'Then say after me.'

The girl obeyed and knelt, whilst the convulsive twitching of her features told how deeply she was moved.

'Our Father,' said the boy; but there was no response. 'Milly, say after me, "Our Father,"—Milly, say, "Our Father."'

'Our Father,' at length exclaimed the oppressed girl, and then broke down, and there followed such a paroxysm of grief that Willie was disturbed, and said, as he took hold of her arm, extended on the bed,

'Milly! Milly! oh, don't do that! Milly, that's wrong!'

But she went on sobbing as though her heart would break. Was it that she was only now realizing the full meaning of the boy's words in reference to his state of health? or was it that the benign and heavenly influence of the Holy Spirit was enlightening her dark mind, and its illumination was more than she could bear up under? It is His mode of operation; it is the prerequisite to the shedding abroad in the heart of the love of God, the testimony to the adoption into His family. No matter how dull the scholar whom He takes into His teaching, the volume of human history, the book of life, has many a page on which is recorded the name of 'the wayfarer who, though a fool,' has been led into the narrow path, and whilst the mind might be too feeble to explain the process, it could yet affirm that 'whereas I was blind, now I see.'

As Willie had ceased to speak, Milly rose from her knees, and, wiping her eyes, leaned over to look into his face, which was turned to the wall. Exhausted by his effort to converse, he had fallen into a heavy sleep, and, unwilling to disturb him further, the sorrowing girl returned the few articles to the trunk, except the Bible, which she put under his pillow, and the penknife, previously deposited in her pocket, and then replaced it on the shelf. Taking one more look at the sleeping boy, with a deep-drawn sigh she extinguished the light and retired.

On the morrow the doctor was called in, the case being deemed beyond the therapeutic skill of the household surgeon; but it was also beyond that of the former, who at once pronounced it so; and that evening Mr. Kearas wrote to London to inform Dr. Scarr of the boy's precarious state, and to request instructions.

The good old purveyor of crowdies was not long in missing her boy, and presenting herself at his bedside, where, in her own simple, pious way, she discoursed on those solemn truths that now most concerned him. The relation of her interview could not be the least interesting of those that took place; but, lest the

reader should pause outside the door whilst Nanny's loving heart expatiated on the bliss that awaited him, and commended him in her prayers to Him who in all her sorrows had never left nor forsaken her, we forbear.

'Hey, mem,' exclaimed the old woman in reply to Mrs. Kearas, as she withdrew from the premises, 'bud aw'm reyt sorry, aw'm feeared he'll noa see the leet o' mony moar days; the last grains o' saand are runnin' doan fast. Aw've seen moppets yon gate afore, an' he's boon to dee. Ah, bonnie! tha little knaws ha lonely thi Granny'll be when tha'rt goan; shoo'll miss thi little tales, and shoo'll noa ha' ony wun t' read tull her oot o' t' good Book. Et's hard to gie tha oop, ma poar lamb, tho' mebbe ev tha'd been speared ut ha' ben harder fur tha to wather th' wutherin' storm, so ut's all fur best. I'll fail mysen some day, and then aw hoap to meet 'im aboon;' saying which, she wiped away the tears that were running copiously down her cheeks.

'Ah!' responded the schoolmistress, 'it's hard saying what any of us will come to;' and then added, as she drew out her pocket-handkerchief, ready for an emergency, 'It's hard parting with them dear little ones, they do so get into a body's heart, the more them whose guardians are so punctual with the payments. It'll be a great loss indeed, Mrs. Miller.' This last thought came very seasonably, as it assisted materially in the effort to summon a tear; but as it was not seconded, after remaining long enough to gain Mrs. Miller's attention, she concluded to deposit the solitary drop in her handkerchief, with the trite remark that 'they couldn't say who'd be the next, and it was some satisfaction to know he wasn't the worst in the school.'

'Tha may say yon; he's been well teached. How good it is to traan oop a child in t' way he should go.'

'Indeed, you may say that,' replied the schoolmistress with emphasis, concluding that the quotation had especial reference to the training by the Grumbleby authorities; 'that's what I always say to Minas, Mrs. Miller, when we're discoursing on the way some of them boys do carry on,—I say to him, Minas, train 'em up, and he do train 'em up, I tell ye.'

Nanny saw there was some misapprehension, though she could not exactly say where, and so, by way of putting the schoolmistress right, repeated the quotation with the concluding portion thereof, '"Traan oop a child in t' way 't shood gae, an'

when's 't owd he'll noa depart from 't;" 'aht's what's sed in t' Book, marm.'

'Of course,' retorted Mrs. Kearas somewhat testily, annoyed at what appeared an attempt to instruct one who, as an important member of a learned institution, should know so much better than herself,—'of course it's in the Book. I'm aware of that, Mrs. Miller; but perhaps *you* are not aware that we have all those books in our 'Cademy, and they're full of them teachings. We've Walkingham's Assistant, and Mavor, and—and a lot more of 'em.'

As a matter of course, Mrs. Miller was silenced by the impartation of such information, and took leave, wondering on her way home that the boys had never mentioned to her the names of the two new assistants, Messrs. Walkingham and Mavor.

CHAPTER LX.

A CRISIS.

THE surgeon was seated alone in his little dark sanctum. The fusty, heated atmosphere, that more or less always pervaded the room for want of ventilation, was rendered additionally noxious—at least to any other than its present occupant—from the fact of the door having been closed all the morning. His head rested on one hand, and he seemed absorbed in some difficult problem, that had been bothering him ever since the twopenny postman had that morning handed him a letter that lay open before him. At length he raised his head, stretched his legs under the table, thrust his hands into his pockets, and exclaimed mechanically, 'To be or not to be,' and then resolved into his former reverie, from which he once more aroused himself, and took up the thought contained in the quotation, adding, 'Ay, that *is* the question,' and then shut his eyes as though working out the solution. Presently he drew himself up and rose from his chair, and paced the floor two or three times, then stopped and repeated the words, 'Yes, that *is* the question,' which proved the solution had not yet been arrived at, but was still under deliberation. Approaching the table, he took up the letter, and read, '"Providence"—pish! what's Providence to do with it?—"is against us."' He threw the letter down with an expression of contempt, and added, 'The devil, more likely; and yet I'd rather have supposed *he* would have favoured so devout an ally.' Then, as though vexed at his own lightness, he exclaimed, 'But it's no time for trifling; something must be done, and that at once.' He took up the letter again, and read on until he came to another word that called forth his disapprobation: '"Compromise,"—compromise? not yet.' Once more he threw down the letter, and continued his monologue. 'No, by St. Anthony! Outwitted by a fool of a boy! Our purpose

marred by the complicity of a pettifogging lawyer's clerk! They don't know me;' and he compressed his lip and shook his fist, as he exclaimed aloud, 'I'll do it—I'll do it,' and was about to resume his seat, when a knock at the door was followed by the entrance of the assistant, who, with a hand tremulous for want of a second morning 'nip,' handed him a letter just delivered by the general postman.

'Leave the door open; it's suffocating here,' said the surgeon, as a rush of less impure air came in from the passage, and thereby indicated the state of the inner atmosphere. 'Where's young Trelawney?'

'Gone to the lecture, sir,' responded the assistant.

'Keep your eye on him, Mr. Grumphy,—keep your eye on him.'

'Don't fear, sir, he'll not pass me again.'

As the assistant retired, the surgeon looked at the postmark on the letter, and frowned as he muttered 'Yorkshire,' and then, forgetful of his order to the assistant, closed the door, and seated himself at the table; immediately upon which, Mr. Grumphy slipped out at the shop door to obtain a composing draught at the tavern a few doors higher up, returning in better trim.

'Wasn't one trouble enough?' thought the surgeon, after he had perused the letter from Mr. Kearas, informing him of the illness of Willie Wilton. 'Afraid he'll die! What's he afraid of?—Loss of the pay, more likely. Still, it would be unfortunate if he were to die just now.' After a few moments' consideration, he took a sheet of notepaper from a side drawer, and wrote, apparently extracting a few lines from Mr. Kearas' letter. But on perusing what he had written, he tore the paper up, and took out a fresh piece, and wrote again, and then enclosed the one from the schoolmaster in his own, and sealed and addressed the latter, and, with the one from Mr. Hawkes, deposited it in his pocket. Thereupon he put on his hat, and went out at the side door, and dropped the note into a letter-box in the Strand. Calling a cab, he drove towards Blackfriars Bridge, and was eventually set down at the County Terrace, at which place Mr. Hawkes and Captain Lejette already awaited him.

The Captain had, by some fortuitous means, managed to get out of the sheriff's custody, but appeared to be under the constant dread of again falling thereinto, and, under such apprehension, had persistently declined any further consultations at Barge Yard, which he declared was 'the queerest hole of a place

he ever knew, and must have been purposely contrived to trap unlucky devils like himself.' Nor would he be satisfied, even at so remote a distance therefrom, until he had been permitted to inspect the rooms and passages of Mr. Hawkes' residence, and made a very minute survey of the back yard, lest that mode of egress should chance to prove more desirable than that by which he had entered.

Satisfied in this particular, Captain Lejette took his seat by the table with the others, but, on the attorney opening the conversation with the expression, 'I'm afraid,' he looked nervously round the room, and moved his seat so as to face the door.

'I'm afraid, gentlemen, there is need of more than extra caution to bring this matter to a successful issue. As I informed you in my letter, Doctor, Nettle and Barrem have requested, on behalf of an intending purchaser, to peruse the trust-deed, not satisfied with the deeds and title already exhibited, relating to the old brewery.'

'Not satisfied with the deeds relating to the old brewery,' interposed Lejette; 'then let 'em have all the deeds in your office, Hawkes, if that will induce them to purchase that splendid mansion.'

'Messieurs Nettle and Barrem,' continued the attorney, without deigning to notice the Captain's untimely effort at facetiousness, 'are men who are accounted very 'cute, men who want to know the why and the wherefore of everything that they have to do with, and decline to take the word of a brother practitioner of longer standing even than themselves. What's to be done, gentlemen, in that case? What can you do with men who doubt everything you advance? What would you do with one in your profession who questioned your word?'

'Call him out—call him out, Hawkes. I'll be your friend. Pistol him,' responded the redoubtable Captain.

'Sir,' said the attorney, with a shudder, as he closed his eyes to avoid the sight of the magnanimous tempter, 'you forget the weapons of my warfare are not carnal.'

'Carnal!' repeated the military man, not comprehending the meaning, especially in relation to weapons. 'Carnal! Oh! ah! you mean colonel. Colonel's weapons! Ah! ah! quite so. No, no, you don't want them. I'll lend you mine,—a captain's shooters are as sure as a colonel's.'

'Gentlemen, we've no time for trifling,' interposed the surgeon, impatient of the Captain's repartees.

'They insist upon probing everything,' resumed the attorney.

'Mistaken their calling,—ought to have been medicos,' ejaculated the irrepressible Lejette, as he looked at the surgeon, but who frowned severely. 'Clever dogs, those Nettles and Brooms. Like to have the drilling of them.'

'All this you have already informed me of in your letter,' said the surgeon, addressing Mr. Hawkes.

'Yes, we know all about that,' exclaimed the Captain, who was hearing it for the first time. 'We don't want to trouble you to repeat it; it's the dibs we want. You're a plaguey long time raising the wind. I'd have done it in half the time, Hawkes.'

'Indeed, sir,' said the attorney, not inclined to pass over this imputation upon his smartness. 'Then I would be obliged if you would inform me how.'

'How?'

'Yes, how?'

'Why, do you think I could not?'

'Well, how, sir,' demanded the attorney, getting on his mettle for once, and keeping him to the point,—'how would you do it?'

The Captain was posed by this unexpected retort, evidently at a loss for any explanation; and by way of evasion, or rather turning his querist from the uncomfortable position in which he had so boldly placed him, scanned him with a supercilious air, and letting his eyeglass, suspended to the riband, fall, exclaimed, 'Do you think I'm an ass?'

'I shouldn't like to say,' replied the attorney, looking over at the surgeon, but which, coming from Mr. Hawkes, was really saying a great deal.

Before the belligerent Captain had time to get at his card-case, which it is questionable if he could have found in any of his pockets, the surgeon interposed in an authoritative manner, and succeeded in drawing their attention again to the matter in hand, exclaiming,

'And so now they threaten to proceed against us, eh?'

'Against us—myself included! Ha! ha! that's good. Then they're bigger fools than you think them. Sue a beggar,—you know the rest, Scarr,' said the Captain, throwing himself back in the chair, and indulging in an affected laugh.

The surgeon gave him a look that restored him to a more sober state, and made him wince, as he observed, 'You don't

seem to realize the gravity of our position. We are here, if I understand the case aright, not only to consult as to the future, but to devise means for our present safety. We have been betrayed, sir!'

He accompanied this announcement with so heavy a blow on the table that the nerves of the gallant officer relaxed, and he jumped up from his chair and looked hastily around the room; then, as he resumed his seat, requested the surgeon not to be so demonstrative, and inquired in an alarmed tone who had betrayed them.

'Who?' replied the surgeon,—'Hawkes' late clerk.'

'Hawkes' clerk?—that what's his name—Skewers—no, Scraggs,—that fool? By Jove! and you let him, Hawkes?'

'How could I prevent it? What could I do?'

'Do? A dozen things. *Capias* him, and provide him a safe retreat, as they did me, or as you did old Fishskin; or, worst come to worst, give him his *quietus*, and send him to Scarr for a *post-mortem*, and he'd return you his skin for parchment. And where's he now? Can't we get hold of him?'

'In Nettle and Barrem's office,' replied the attorney, with a desponding look.

'Then it's all dickey with us. Never liked the sappy look of that Skewers, though I thought there was honour even among thieves. Positively shocking, "the inhumanity of man to man." But what do you advise?' but, without awaiting the advice, the Captain went on to give his own, and urged that they should sell the place for what they could get, and be done with it.

'Easier said than done,' replied the attorney. 'To-day Nettle and Barrem have served me with an injunction to stay further proceedings.'

'Don't mind it, Hawkes. Let them attend to their own affairs.'

'They are acting on behalf of Dr. Scarr's promising pupil, young Trelawney,' said the attorney in a rather reproachful tone.

'By Jove! another traitor! Two spies in the camp, and neither of you the sense to detect them until too late! Hark! What's that?'

For a minute the conversation ceased, but as nothing further than the rattle made by two boys drawing sticks along the iron railings enclosing the terrace was heard, the conversation was resumed.

'Can't anything be done with that boy?' continued the

Captain. 'Very unfortunate that we didn't let him stay where he was. Can't we send him back? or send him abroad?'

'Abroad! abroad!' responded the surgeon, who had been too engaged revolving the position of affairs in his own mind to heed the reflections contained in the Captain's remarks; 'that idea occurred to me before coming here.'

'Capital idea! Eh, Hawkes? Kidnap him, and send him over the water to Botany Bay, or to join the Spanish Armada' (he meant the Legion), 'with special instructions to the commanding officer to send him to the front, with a view of distinguishing himself.'

'Or extinguishing,' chimed in the surgeon.

'We have a good precedent for this,' remarked the excellent lawyer, for the moment taken with the suggestion, and desirous of justifying his conduct by the Book, however, rather at fault as to the goodness of the transaction, 'in King David, who did the same with a friend of his, in whom he took a warm interest.'

The matter was thereupon canvassed, and only hesitated to be adopted by the presentation of a greater risk, the difficulty and danger to themselves, since, as the attorney reminded them, the young man was now fairly in the hands of Nettle and Barrem, men who were too much on the alert to be able to elude their vigilance.

In the midst of a pause, during which each was realizing the awkwardness of their position, Captain Lejette, seized with a new idea, exclaimed, 'What's a body-snatcher, Scarr? Isn't it something in your line?—a section, that is, some of the rank and file of your corps, or, more technically, corpse. Ha, ha! ole boy! What's a body-snatcher?'

'You ought to know,' responded the surgeon half-resentingly, —'you ought to know; you've had some experience in that line. Your delectable carcase has been grabbed more than once, and, judging from appearances, you seem in bodily fear of its being snatched again.'

This unpleasant allusion to himself quite drove his intended suggestion from his mind, and before he could regain his composure the street-door was heard to close, and a loud talking in the passage ensued.

'What's that?' exclaimed the alarmed man, starting to his feet. 'By Jove! it is'— The sound of feet ascending the stairs was heard. 'Lock the door, Hawkes, lock the door;' saying which he ran to a cupboard by the side of the chimney, where

he was about to ensconce himself, when the surgeon maliciously remarked that he'd be sure to be trapped there; whereupon, starting back, he said in a whisper, as he hastened to the back window, 'The mouse that has but one hole is easily taken,' then threw open the sash, and, ascertaining there was a lean-to or shed immediately thereunder, grasped the window-sill, and commenced lowering himself down, and disappeared at the moment that a loud knock at the door with a stick was followed by the entrance of a rough-looking individual, with a thick cudgel in hand, dressed in loose blue trousers and heavy pea-jacket. Without awaiting an invitation, the stranger advanced to the table.

'Beg pardon, gentlemen. Hope I don't intrude; but this gal o' yourn has got no fault in it,—said you were engaged; but as my business is pressing I couldn't wait.' Having thus justified the servant girl, who had endeavoured to prevent his abrupt intrusion, he nodded to her as she closed the door and retired, and then, continuing his address, after taking a survey of the surgeon, he demanded of the attorney 'if he were Lawyer Hawkes.'

'I am that person,' said the attorney, 'and, as the owner of this house, beg to inform you that your unseasonable interruption—indeed, forcible entrance upon my premises—is most unjustifiable.'

'No offence, captain. Hold hard a minute, and I'll 'splain all.' Whereupon he threw himself into the chair Lejette had vacated, and invited the other two to be seated, and, after wiping his sunburnt features and neck with the handkerchief taken from his glazed hat, continued, 'I've been cruising all round here to find out your moorings. Arrived last from Demerary, had a pretty fair run, and, after bringing up at the West Ingy docks, I started in chase of an old messmate—leastwise, I oughter say chum, considering he warn't no sailor—that I hadn't clapped eyes on—well, it must be going on two years—yes, full that.'

'And what have I to do with that?' said the attorney, interrupting him.

'Hold on a turn, that's what I'm coming to; just you hold on a spell, skipper. Well, after steering for where the old hulk had grounded when I were last here, blowed if I weren't taken aback, when I got alongside of the old spot, to find he'd hauled down his colours, and cleared. Howsomdever, not to make too long a yarn'—

'As my time is of importance, and my friend here is in a hurry, you will please inform me at once of your business.'

'That's where I'm making for, and 's why I'm hauling in the slack. So, after tacking and going aboutship half-a-dozen times or more, till I were fairly aground, I larnt that he'd been taken in tow by one o' your landsharks, and berthed in the King's Dock, I think it were, somewhere hereabouts, where I s'pose he's likely to lay and rot for all anybody knows or cares.'

'I must beg'—interposed the attorney.

'Avast now! I'm coming to the point. Well, after beating about the offing, I found out that it were by your orders the old craft had been docked, so I bore down to the slip where your crib lies, but as I learnt you were not going to be down to-day, I chartered a hack to bring me out here, and here I am, cappen.'

'So I see, but I am still at a loss to know *why* you are here, as well as who you are.'

'You don't want me to go over all that again! howsomdever, all I want to know is, what you put him into dry dock for, and what's to pay?'

'Who are you speaking about? what's his name?'

'Why, Figgins, to be sure,—arn't I telling you all about him,—as was my old chum?'

'Figgins!' exclaimed Mr. Hawkes, and which was echoed by the surgeon; 'and who are you?'

Of course the reader has already identified the sailor whom we encountered in his previous search for 'The Battle and the Breeze' in Wapping.

'Who am I? Well, at present I'm mate of the clipper ship *Apame*, home from South Americay. I s'pose you don't remember me, years ago, when I were 'ployed at Trelawney and Company's? I wouldn't a-known you, skipper, you're so altered.'

'Are you the man they called Ben?' said Mr. Hawkes with unaffected surprise.

'Ay, ay, sir, that's me, Ben Blower.'

The lawyer and surgeon exchanged uneasy looks, when the latter inquired 'whether he was to remain long in town?'

'No. Expect to sail for the West Inges every day, and that's why I bore up here. Sorry to interrupt, but hadn't no time to spare, and now I want to know what are the dock charges afore old Figgins can be hauled out?'

'I can't answer that question now, I must refer to my books;'

replied the attorney; 'but if you come to my office in Barge Yard to-morrow, we'll talk the matter over.'

'"Business to-morrow," old Mr. Trelawney used to tell us, "ruined Harry Stiders," so I'd like to finish at once, governor. We won't be 'tickler for a sovereign; would ten pound clear him?'

The attorney smiled, and intimated that ten times that amount would be insufficient.

'You don't tell me that!' exclaimed the amazed sailor; 'why, yon tarnation old lubber to run to leeward in that way, and he always a-preaching to me. "Ben," says he,—that's old Figgins,—"Ben," says he, "never lose your reckoning;" howsomdever, as you arn't got no time to spare, and I haven't the rhino, I'll strike a bargain with you. I'll give you fifty pounds to let him out; come, that's a bargain,—and you'll get to windward of us then, for you'll get nothing if you keep him anchored there.' But as both the lawyer and the surgeon insisted on declining the offer, and, moreover, refused to hold any further parley with him at that time, or at any other place than the attorney's office, he was compelled at last to withdraw, but not before he had, as he termed it, told Mr. Hawkes and his client a bit of his mind, in which he expressed his belief that 'it wasn't all above-board, as he knew Figgins too well to think he'd crowd on canvas at that rate,' and went out of the room exclaiming that 'there were land as well as sea sharks, and some on 'em had got hold of old Figgins.'

'Heave ahead,' said he in a surly tone, as he pulled himself up hand over hand to the top of the hackney coach, where he seated himself with his legs dangling over the side, having, when hiring the same on the stand, resisted the driver's entreaties to sit in the cabin, as he termed the inside, insisting on his right to remain on deck.

'Where to?' demanded the jarvey.

'King's Docks,' replied Ben in the same surly tone, and then, without deigning any further notice, commenced humming the old refrain, 'I've often met with such a breeze, but never with such a blow.' After driving some distance past the Bricklayers' Arms, the fare began to have some suspicion that coachee was out of his reckoning, and, bringing him to a halt, learned that he was endeavouring to convey him to the place indicated, at some remote distance, in the neighbourhood of the Victualling Office, at the lower end of Limehouse Reach; whereupon, after an

altercation as to the meaning of words, the driver turned his horses' heads, and made his way back along the Kent Road to the King's Bench Prison, that being the place intended in the sailor's vernacular, but not reached until they had become mutually disgusted,—Ben by the lubberly seamanship, as he expressed it, of the driver, and the latter by the perplexing directions of the former 'to keep *her* head west-half-nothe,' and again 'west an' by nothe,' and anon to 'port the helm, or he'd miss stays,' or as he urged him 'to get to wind'ard of some coal lighters,' as he termed two waggons filled with sacks of coal. However, by way of compensation for such harassing directions in so incomprehensible a jargon, the driver charged double fare, which, in happy ignorance of the imposition, the sailor paid without demur.

But, leaving him at the gate of the prison, we must return to the conference at the County Terrace, with which this chapter was more expressly intended to deal. After the sailor had retired, and the lapse of a short time, in which both the solicitor and the surgeon had been silently revolving the vexatious scene that had taken place, the former looked over to the surgeon, and exclaimed, with a long-drawn sigh,

'How mysterious! What a strange and embarrassing coincidence!'

'What do you refer to?' replied the surgeon snappishly. 'I see nothing strange.'

'That man; to think that he should turn up just at this unfortunate stage! Doctor, Providence is against us,—or rather, you and Lejette.'

'Well, as I presume He is still on *your* side, suppose we leave the matter altogether in your hands, and under such direction no doubt you'll bring us safely through.'

This was uttered in so scathing a manner that the pusillanimous attorney winced, but, recovering, returned to his position, and continued in the same strain, so often heretofore indulged in as a sedative or palliative to his seared conscience.

'Dr. Scarr, I appeal to you if I have not thus far acted entirely in conformity with instructions. The responsibility is wholly your own,—that is, yours and Captain Lejette's. As my clients, I'—

'Hawkes,' interrupted the surgeon, with a peremptoriness that awed the attorney, 'I understand our position, as I am fully persuaded you do, despite your repeated efforts to ignore your

part therein. As for that popinjay, that has so ingloriously shown the white feather by retreating through your back premises, I disdain any division of responsibility with him, though I may not be able so easily to rid myself of his impecuniosity, or his claim to a division of the spoils. Still I anticipate little or no difficulty in that quarter, as it is becoming altogether too warm for him to remain much longer in this country, and in that case, by a sort of compromise, I intend to make him useful for once. The onus, therefore, rests with *you* and me. Be pleased to listen' (perceiving the attorney was about to remonstrate). 'The course I have taken and pursued, I took advisedly; the legal mode, of course, being under your conduct for equally valuable considerations. No subterfuge on your part can now avail to exonerate you.' The lawyer became uneasy, but was still prevented uttering a word by the impetuosity of his cold, stern client. 'Contrary to our anticipations, we have been thwarted—that is, apparently so—in this particular, but by a more cautious and vigilant procedure, a *coup-de-main* that I have resolved on, though somewhat desperate, the consummation will be in our favour. There can be no thought of surrender, or of your being overmatched by your brother professionals. You understand, then: their proceedings must be blocked, by means too familar to you as a lawyer to prove difficult, or require hesitancy, and before they can remove the hindrance, or take further proceedings, I hope to have rendered such action unnecessary.' As the surgeon ceased he opened his eyes to their full extent, and looked fiercely into the lawyer's face, who once more writhed under their glare.

'Dr. Scarr,' said he, in a deprecating tone, 'I hope you are not about to adopt any extravagant course. Consider your character—the world'—

'Leave that to me,' said the surgeon, in an unusually flippant manner. 'What I undertake I am quite capable of performing. "Needs must when the devil drives;" and since you express your fears that your tutelar deity is against us, come under the patronage of mine, and you'll gain, or, as Lejette would say, you'll come off with flying colours.' So audacious a suggestion caused the little colour in the lawyer's cheeks and lips to fade, and he was about to enter a solemn caveat against any such partnership, when the surgeon stopped him, and in a tone that, from its occasional tremulousness, indicated the strong effort to restrain the malevolent passion that stirred within, proceeded:

'Hawkes, it's time you dropped the mask. Hitherto you have been indulged in your saintly disclaimers of non-complicity; as long as they afforded you consolation without proving an obstacle to your proceedings, although too transparent to deceive any but yourself, no objection has been offered to their iteration, but matters have become too serious for you and me to stand upon trifles or indulge in puerilities. To all intents and purposes, to employ your own technical phraseology, you are a *particeps criminis*. Don't start, sir; we are in the same boat, and you know it, and we swim or sink together. Do your duty, and we swim. I'll tug at the oar, and a strong tug I'll give; but you must take a firm grasp of the helm, and keep us clear of the legal rocks. There are breakers ahead, but a little skilful manœuvring and you weather all danger.' At the conclusion of his impassioned address the surgeon rose and paced the room, whilst the attorney followed him with a painful look, quite persuaded that the unflinching character he had to deal with was capable of meeting an emergency, however desperate. His timid disposition cowered to the dominancy of the stronger mind, and he only sighed as he shrank from the flashing gaze of the headstrong man.

Mechanically closing the window by which Lejette had made his exit, the surgeon returned to his seat at the table, and, somewhat calmed by the silence of the attorney, in a careless tone resumed his address.

'Hawkes, let me advise for once. The deed, as I understand, was omitted to be registered; if pushed too closely, it must be suppressed, and a new one produced.'

'Dr. Scarr, would you have me'—

'I would have you listen till I have concluded what I am about to say. As no one can prove their existence'—

'One moment, Doctor; you surely forget that both Figgins and that man that has so inopportunely turned up were both witnesses; and further, that my late clerk—one of the chief movers, I suspect, in the course taken by the solicitors—is also aware of its existence.'

'Ah, the mischief! I had forgotten the latter circumstance,' exclaimed the surgeon, for once at fault; upon which he appeared to ruminate a few seconds, with closed eyes, and then continued, 'Still he, like the other two, is not acquainted with the contents, or but imperfectly so.'

'How very unfortunate that that youth should have been

taken from school!' said the lawyer, under a vague hope of directing the surgeon's thoughts to his own defective policy, and thereby turning the tables on himself.

'I am astonished you did not advise better,' rejoined the surgeon. 'However, as that can't be undone, our effort must be to amend our lack of wisdom, and, as we are still his guardians, to consign him to some safe place at a respectable distance. I have thought that matter over before coming here, in case we could devise no better plan. There may be some trouble, even hazard, but it is equally dangerous to allow him to remain where he can come in contact with his present advisers. He has no relatives, or friends even, sufficiently interested to institute inquiries, and if there were, there would be no difficulty in making it appear that he had gone abroad to obtain information relative to his late father's property. I shall not require your assistance in the matter further than to keep those solicitors at bay for a short time, and prevent their obtaining any further insight into matters; Lejette will do the rest.'

'As to that,' replied the attorney, much relieved to find that he was not expected to co-operate in the abduction, 'you may rely on me. But, Doctor,—pardon such reflections,—you must confess'—

'I never confess,' interrupted the surgeon tartly, anticipating another objection.

The attorney might have suggested, as did a noble man of God, in response to a similar utterance, 'that in such case he hoped he never did wrong;' but he only sighed, which provoked a further retort from his perverse client, who, confident in the strength of his own will, presumed to dogmatize and assert that authority which he had gained over the weaker mind of the cowed lawyer.

'Hawkes, again I would remind you it's time you stopped such cant; it has not served you thus far, and will not in the long run. Be honest, man, and do your duty, untrammelled by such fallacies; and if you are in doubt as to what that duty is, let me add, it lies in the direction of your interest.'

Another involuntary sigh at such bold, unequivocal utterances was the only response.

A conversation then ensued, in which it was arranged that their next course was to be determined by the action of Messrs. Nettle and Barrem, but that no concession was to be made to Figgins' new advocate, as the liberation of that individual at the

present would be exceedingly injudicious. Overtures were also to be made to Skeggs, whereby he might be silenced, it being assumed that his interest in one with whom he could be but little acquainted was more the result of spite than friendship. In the meantime, with the co-operation of Captain Lejette, seconded by Grumphy, the surgeon was to undertake the disposal of Frendzburgh. With such and a few minor arrangements the consultation terminated. During the discussion the attorney had broached the idea of compromise, which, as hinted at in his letter to the surgeon, he would have much preferred, could it have been accomplished without risk; but it was soon made apparent that, whilst in such case there must be the abandonment of all prospect of further gain, for which his clients were now more clamorous than ever, their necessities being greater, the *exposé* of the past nefarious appropriations might draw on all condign punishment, especially the attorney, the penalty of being struck off the Rolls being a certain sequence, in addition to prosecution. The idea was therefore abandoned, as fraught not only with danger, but involving too great a surrender of prospective advantage.

CHAPTER LXI.

UNACCOUNTABLE PROCEEDINGS—BEN CAPTURES AN OLD FRIEND.

A DOUBLE rap at the door of the Herberts, in Bedford Square, on the afternoon of the same day on which the conference at County Terrace had been held, intimated that the twopenny postman, on his rounds in that district, had called to deliver one or more of those billets which, though occasionally of trifling import, are sometimes fraught with announcements productive of life-long consequences. In heedless haste, Mary sought out the young ladies, and handed to each a note. The superscription on the one to the elder was in a very scratchy, blotted hand, and the note itself thicker than that to her sister, which, on the other hand, still redolent of otto or other perfume, was addressed in a very elaborately-flourishing style of penmanship.

'Well, now, is not that beautiful?' remarked Miss Harriet in a tone of affected admiration, as she held the note at arm's-length, with her gaze fixed on the ornate caligraphy, and then turned it over to examine the crested impression, evidently carefully made on the neatly melted wax that sealed it. 'Deary me! how emblematical!—a naked dexter arm, embowed, the hand grasping a—goose-quill,—very significant! O no! it's an arrow, intended for my poor defenceless heart, no doubt. And what's the motto?—*Vincit amor!* Heigh-ho! poor Zany! isn't he desperate? It's too pretty to break, so I must wait until I fall in with my scissors to cut it open, which is certainly very tantalizing to a poor weak woman's curiosity; but it can't be helped, for this poor little fluttering heart is going too pit-a-patty to risk the consequences of a peep. You must therefore wait until it calms.' Saying which she threw the note carelessly on the work-table before her, where it soon got buried under the articles tossed over it, and forgotten for a while. 'Anything

very newsy or interesting, Bertie dear, in your epistle? Any dying swain throwing a lance? Shouldn't wonder. A certain Æsculapian young student, become so enamoured of his charming patient that he has taken to writing prescriptions, referable more to a diagnosis of his own state; the ingredients reading thus,—let me see,—tincture of rose-leaf, twenty drops; essence of millefleurs, an equal quantity; extract of forget-me-not, fifteen, —quite enough; distilled heart's-ease, forty drops, an extra quantity being requisite to subdue the strong palpitations; and, —well, that will do to begin with. Half a teaspoonful three times a day; to be well shaken before taken.'

Had Bertha been listening to her quizzing sister as she rattled on in this style, it is probable she would have retaliated by suggesting whether the recipe, thus prepared, would not better suit the case of another charmer, whose symptoms of late had evidenced a tendency in the direction indicated. Indeed, it might be half surmised whether this little badinage, without definitely proposing such a sequence, had not been expected to provoke such a retaliation. But whilst these sportive thoughts flitted through Harriet's sunny mind, far otherwise was it with her sister, who had withdrawn to the window recess to peruse the contents of a note that had stirred her whole being, and which she only ceased to read, as her eyes, filled with tears that dropped thereon, rendered her unable to decipher the words.

As her sister appeared so absorbed in her letter, Harriet ceased her prattle, and resumed her employment at the fancy needlework at which she had been engaged when interrupted by the arrival of the post. It was an heraldic device, intended for a fire-screen, the pattern of which lay before her, and had been procured and presented by Frendzburgh. It comprised only the centre of a ducal arms, without supports or coronet, as being less difficult; and as that gentleman was expected to call in the evening, she was anxious to complete it before his arrival, consequently she was too occupied therewith to notice her sister's emotion.

'What a bother, my lord duke or grace of somebody!' said she, as she stopped to mark her progress. 'All that to do yet! I'll never finish it in time. I'm glad they gave you no quarter, at least on your escutcheon,—it saves me a great deal of trouble; but really that's a strange-looking head of yours;' and she looked very intently at the pattern. 'What a striking likeness! I wonder if Zenas sat for it.' Quite amused at this pretended

resemblance of the buck's head to that young gentleman, she indulged in a smile, and then a merry laugh, as the similarity appeared to strike her with more effect. 'Yes, you'll wear the horns, I tell you. Look, sister mine,' and, sticking the needle into the eye of the animal, she rose to point out to Bertha the prominent feature that had brought Mr. Zenas' image so vividly before her, and had proceeded half-way to the window before she became aware that she had left the room, the door of which had been left ajar, with the intention, doubtless, of not attracting her sister's notice.

As her eyes wandered around, they fell on the envelope, or half sheet of paper in which her sister's letter had been enclosed. Picking it up, she looked at the address, and expressed herself on the beauty of the blurred characters, deciding that it was from old Pilgarlic, and was about to seek Bertha, thinking it possible there might be some mention therein of his handsome student, when, on second thoughts, she decided to amuse herself by the perusal of the note to herself, and, after a search, drew it from its covert. Again she was about to criticise the address, when the expression of her countenance changed, and, hastily turning the letter over, she looked at the seal, and exclaimed, as her cheeks became flushed, 'Why, that's not that silly boy's writing! but then he never writes twice alike;' which was the case, as, in order to enhance the value of his *billets-doux*, he was taking lessons in the art of writing, six lessons wherein were to enable him to write copperplate, and of course each lesson, as it tended to that perfection, was productive of a further change in the original.

Unable longer to restrain herself, from the new idea with which she had become possessed, and without further thought of preserving the unique seal, she tore open the letter, and read thus:—

'"DEAR MISS HARRIET"— Miss Harriet! That's right, Master Zenas, more respectful than I expected; some hope of you yet. Well, let me see, as aforesaid,—"Dear Miss Harriet, —You will pardon my presumption in the liberty thus taken of addressing you"— Liberty! quite a change. Glad he's made that discovery. But is it really from'— and, turning over to look at the signature, the colour mounted to her eyes, and she experienced a slight trepidation as she read, 'Frendzburgh Trelawney;' then, turning back to the commencement, she read, in an altered tone and manner:

'You will pardon my presumption in the liberty thus taken of addressing you, and which, under the circumstances, may present itself in the light of a breach of propriety, after having been prohibited continuing my visits to Bedford Square, a privilege I had learned so highly to value.

'Unable to fulfil the engagement I had looked forward to with so much pleasure, and bowing to the wishes of your mamma, I cannot do so without assuring you that the memory of the happy hours spent in the delightful society of Mrs. Herbert and her daughters will never be effaced.

'With sentiments of gratitude to you all, and—pardon me for adding—something more than esteem and respect for yourself, permit me to subscribe myself,

'Dear Miss Harriet,

'Your sincere friend,

'FRENDZBURGH TRELAWNEY.'

Had the symbolic arrow impressed on the seal at that moment pierced the heart of the bewildered girl, she could not have experienced a deeper pang. Totally unprepared for such an event,—on the contrary, indulging a secret and increasing delight in his society,—she only now fully realized how essential he had become to her happiness. She was stunned as much by this premature revelation of her deep interest in the young student as by the shock of its sudden rupture. The bright colour fled her roseate cheeks, her pale lips quivered, and blinding tears suffused her eyes. She dropped her head on the work on which she had been employed, as it lay on the table, and gave vent to a few hysterical sobs. Presently a shower of tears came to her relief, and with a strong effort she roused herself, and, stooping, picked up the epistle whose enigmatical language had produced this convulsion, read and re-read each line, and as she did so there arose an emotion of indignation, first at her mother, then at Messieurs Scarr and Zenas, between whom it alternated, until finally it was transferred to the writer of the note.

'What!' she asked herself, 'admitted all these had interposed, was he so easily daunted? and could he so readily forego her society without one word of appeal, or attempt at an explanation, or even request for a last interview?'

Hitherto her ardent temperament had been basking in dreamland, surrounding herself with cavaliers who would have slain dragons or immolated themselves for their Dulcineas; and here

was a sudden rude dissipation of the enchantment. The first who had been permitted access to her maiden heart, and obtained a lodgment there, was tamely and coldly submitting to a trifling opposition (if, indeed, he was not under some delusion, which she was certain he must be) like any ordinary being. Then she asked, 'After all, what was he to her? He had never avowed himself. What right had she to require any such devotion?' and, with a little violence to her judgment, that told her there were other modes of avowal than the language of the tongue, and whereby such avowal could and had found expression, she endeavoured to palliate his conduct, and turn her thoughts to the party named as the cause of the prohibition. 'What could it mean? why had her mamma acted so unaccountably and so precipitately, without even a hint of her intention?' She was aware of her predilections in favour of Zenas, and that she looked unfavourably upon the attention of any other, and that she had of late, more than once, warned her against too unreserved an intercourse with the handsome student, whose antecedents and prospects by no means commended him as an eligible suitor to the hand of her younger daughter; and it was possible that, as these warnings had not appeared to have controlled or influenced her susceptible daughter, she had taken this decided course with the intention of preventing the intimacy ripening into anything stronger. Still, that she should have done so thus abruptly, and without the least intimation to herself or sister, or consideration for the feelings of their visitor, was as inexplicable as it was opposed to her mamma's usual high sense, if not of the natural, at least of the artificial, refinements or proprieties of polite society, upon which she ordinarily prided herself; and, furthermore, she had been fully cognisant of the engagement for that evening, and, though not encouraging it, had not positively objected thereto. Again, and which added to the embarrassment, when or how could Mrs. Herbert's objection have been made known to Mr. Trelawney, as she had unexpectedly left town by stage the previous evening to spend a few days with an old friend at Salisbury?

Unable to unravel the mystery, she took up the letter, and was about proceeding in search of her sister, whose wiser head might aid in its elucidation, when Mary Jones entered the room, and handed her a note that had just been left at the door, at the same time informing her that Miss Herbert wished to see her in her chamber. From the girl's manner, and lingering about, it

occurred to Harriet that she was desirous of communicating something, and thereupon she made one or two observations by way of encouragement.

'Where's Miss Herbert going, Miss?' said Mary.

'Miss Herbert going? Nowhere, child, that I'm aware of.'

'O yes, she is, for she's packing some things into her valise, and her bonnet and travelling cloak are lying on the bed.'

'Nonsense, girl. Where would she be going, unless for a drive?'

'Yes, Miss, she is; and there's something a matter, cos I saw her reading a letter, and her eyes are red, as though she'd been crying; and—and—I know there's something a matter, because yours are red too.'

'Don't be foolish, child; you're talking nonsense,' replied the young lady, as she folded up the articles on the table, and deposited them in her work-basket.

'Was there bad news in your letters?—is Mrs. Herbert taken ill?'

'No, certainly not; at least, I hope not. What put that in your head?'

'Then p'r'aps it's Mr. Zenas that's ill?'

The mention of the young lawyer's name in such connection almost provoked a laugh, and the reply that it would not grieve her if he was, but which, however, was audibly rendered into, 'And do you think that would make me cry?'

'It wouldn't me, Miss.'

'Why? is he not a very fine young gentleman, Mary?'

'Fine! oh, Miss Harriet, how can you say so? Why, he ain't quarter so nice as the other—I mean Mr. Trelawney. I like him next best to dear Willie.'

'He must have been a wonderful boy that, for he seems to be your standard by which to compare all others.'

'Others! he's better than all others. When he comes this evening, Miss, won't you ask him if he's heard from him? cos he said he was going to write him again, and tell him about me.'

'Who do you wish me to ask? What are you talking about?'

'Mr. Trelawney, when he comes to-night.'

'He will not be here; he is unexpectedly prevented.'

'Why, Miss Herbert said he would, and that I was to help have everything nice, as she would be away.'

'Away!' exclaimed the young lady, recalled to her first surprise; then, stepping over to the mirror to endeavour to obliterate

any trace of her late emotion, she wiped her face and eyes, and hastened to her sister, whom she found, as reported by Mary, making preparations for a journey.

'Why, Bertha! what are you doing?' exclaimed the astonished sister, as she looked round the disordered room in some alarm. 'Have you heard from Aubrey or mamma? Is she ill?'

With a strong effort, of which she was scarcely capable, to master herself, she replied in the negative, but informed her that circumstances, that she was not then in a position to explain, rendered it absolutely necessary that she should leave town for a day or two,—not longer, she hoped; but there was no occasion for any anxiety on her account.

It was in vain that her sister remonstrated with her against taking such a step in the absence of their mamma, who, she was certain, would have resolutely forbidden her going anywhere in her present state of health, unaccompanied either by herself or one of the servants, and more especially as she declined to state the reason or her destination, and entreated her to defer it until her mamma was informed thereof.

To all of which, and much more, she refused to listen, again assuring her that there was not the least cause for anxiety. That she had travelled too often in her life not to be able now to take care of herself; and as she would return before her mamma, there was no necessity of informing her, since to do so would hasten her return, and spoil the pleasure and benefit of her visit. As no reasoning could alter her determination, Harriet ceased to importune, and assisted in the preparations for the journey, which she concluded in her own mind was occasioned by another hasty visit by Aubrey Grey to England; probably merely disembarking at some seaport for the purpose of transmitting important despatches to the Foreign Office through trusty hands, but which State reasons required should remain a secret, and that he had solicited a hurried interview.

Under the circumstances she forbore to burden Bertha with an account of her own cause of sorrow, which had rather a tendency to enlist her sympathy in her sister's presumed trying position, gauging her action by what, under similar circumstances, might have prompted a similar course.

As Bertha entered the coach that was to convey her to the inn whence the stage started for her destination, she could not suppress the emotion that betrayed her feelings, as she pressed her sister to her bosom on taking leave; nor was Harriet less

moved, as she returned to the privacy of her own room, to surrender herself to the painful review of the untoward occurrences of that day.

The note handed to her by Mary was from Mr. Zenas Hawkes, stating his intention of visiting the ladies that evening, whom he hoped to find at home. She had read it in so abstracted a manner that she had laid it down without attending to its purport. At length, rallying, she re-perused it, and, with a forced assumption of her wonted sprightliness, thought to herself, 'That's something like! Who wouldn't admire such spirit as that! Not easily daunted or turned aside.' Then, looking at the broken seal, she read, '*Tente et perfice.* Bravo, Mr. Hawkes, junior! — "Attempt and accomplish!" that's a brave motto. Really, after all, there is something quite prepossessing in the young gentleman,—such perseverance! I admire perseverance. And then so gay, so *nonchalant*, and *so* devoted and courageous. Really, when I come to reflect, I don't wonder at *mamma's* preference!' The emphasis on mamma, of course, rather argued that the preference was still confined to that lady. Such were some of the thoughts that flitted through the mind of the young girl, conceived in that perverse, retaliatory spirit, that finds its justification in some real or imaginary slight or wrong, assumed to have been done by one whose place in the esteem of the aggrieved had hitherto raised him above the possibility of wounding the *amour propre;* deserving sympathy, since in its indulgence there is a self-inflicted punishment, surpassing in intensity that extended to the object on which it thereby deems itself avenged, who, as in this case, may not only be unconscious of having provoked it, but beyond its influence. With this effort to reconcile herself to her great disappointment, she bustled about the room, humming the words of a gay French ditty, at one time removing an ornament from the mantelpiece, and then replacing it, and then tumbling everything out of the drawer of her work-table, and putting all back in a very disorderly manner. As she shut the drawer, her eyes fell again on the young lawyer's note, and she stepped over to the bell-rope and pulled it, with the intention of giving directions that, on that person's presenting himself at the house, he was to be immediately shown into the parlour, but just then her look fell on the pattern of the fire-screen, which instantly changed the current of her thoughts, and in response to the demand of the domestic if she rang, she responded, 'Rang? No,—O yes,—let me see. Yes; if Mr.

Hawkes calls this evening, say Mrs. and Miss Herbert are out of town, and that I am engaged.'

As the servant closed the door, she drew from her pocket the letter that had originated this conflict, and, seating herself on the couch, commenced its re-perusal. Now and again she paused to consider some thought that suggested itself, and at the conclusion had almost resolved herself into the opinion that the writer was the really injured party. 'So abruptly denied the house at which he had been so welcomed, could he be otherwise than keenly affected by such treatment?' 'But how and when,' she again reasoned, 'could her mamma have conveyed such an intimation?' Agitated by such conflicting ideas, she seated herself at her desk with the determination of requesting an explanation, but had scarcely done so before it occurred to her that she would thereby be compromising her mamma, from whom the information should, with greater propriety, be sought; and then, after all, it might be that Mr. Trelawney was acting a part, and had adopted this plan of excusing himself from any further intimacy. This last thought for a time rekindled her resentment, and she was about meditating a crushing rejoinder, couched in language of affected indifference, but just then the concluding words of his letter occurred to her, and she took it up and re-read them more than once, exclaiming, as she folded it and deposited it in her desk, 'O no! impossible! I wrong him.'

However incomprehensible to the young lady, doubtless a solution has already suggested itself to the reader. The surgeon, apart from any new-formed plan of procedure in regard to Frendzburgh, had discovered the increasing favour with which his young pupil was being received at Bedford Square by the young lady towards whom he had such sinister designs, and consequently was not slow in estimating how seriously it might interfere with his purpose, and raise an insurmountable obstacle to its accomplishment. Though so phlegmatic, he was proficient enough in affairs of the heart to comprehend the probable result, to a young and ardent and somewhat romantic school-girl, attending a too close intercourse with a handsome young man, who in every respect would compare too favourably with his *protegé*, and whose *prestige* he had experienced in the unusual influence exercised over Mrs. Scarr, operating withal to his own advantage, in modifying in some degree the harshness of her character. He had not, therefore, scrupled to inform Frendz-

burgh that his visits to the Herberts were not only no longer requisite professionally, but that, being objectionable to Mrs. Herbert, they were to be at once discontinued,—an announcement that, apart from his mortification at the rude manner of the communication, had affected Frendzburgh almost to the same extent as it had the young lady. He was, however, prevented brooding over it as uninterruptedly, by the paramount necessity of becoming engrossed with his own intricate affairs.

With a latent hope that his laconic note might draw forth an explanation, he had looked for a reply thereto; but as none came, lest it should not have reached the right person, he more than once purposely wandered in the vicinity of the square, with an indefinite hope that he might fortuitously obtain an interview with one of the family, but the week passed without any such opportunity occurring. In the meantime, he could not but become impressed with the alteration in the surgeon's demeanour towards himself, as well as in that of his satellite, both of whom behaved with such unprecedented consideration, that his responsive nature, affected thereby, experienced some qualms at the course he had, in justice to himself, sanctioned his lawyers to pursue. However, when, aside from such disturbing influence, his calmer judgment asserted its power over his sensitive nature, the presentation of the knowledge so accidentally acquired, that he had not only been hitherto withheld from his rights, but that he stood in danger of being deprived of his patrimony *in toto*, restored the balance, and placed an impassable gulf between the surgeon and himself. On this account he would have preferred his former distant and cold behaviour, as much more congenial to one of his temperament, as in that case he would have experienced less repugnance in pursuing the course he now felt it imperative to follow. He was also affected by the consideration in which his conduct would be viewed by Mrs. Scarr, to whom, without attributing any other motive than matronly kindness of disposition for her behaviour towards himself, as well as undisguised pride in her prepossessing student, he could not but be sensible of occasion for gratefulness.

But whilst such considerations were operating distressingly on Frendzburgh, it was quite otherwise with the surgeon, who, notwithstanding the change alluded to, was the same sordid, wily, and inflexible man as ever. His nature had undergone no amelioration,—it had been moulded in too cast-iron a form for that; and his conscience had become too seared to be able to

emit one spark of remorse. His inordinate passions, intensified by opposition and the dread of failure, became more concentrated on the end proposed, determined on its accomplishment at all hazards, additionally urged by pecuniary considerations.

A plot—into which the Captain and Grumphy entered heartily with him, and by whose execution of the details he counted on success—was maturing, by which Frendzburgh would be got out of the way, and thereby be removed the impediment to the realization of their long-cherished and persistently struggled-for schemes, that appeared to be eluding their grasp at the moment they were anticipating their successful termination, besides ridding themselves of a danger that threatened them unless speedily counteracted.

It was therefore with this dark purpose in view that both the surgeon and his assistant now behaved in a more courteous manner towards their intended victim, and which, as intimated, notwithstanding his convictions, Frendzburgh had found it difficult to avoid reciprocating, and might have partially succumbed to, had it not been for the salutary influence of Skeggs, with whom he was necessarily in occasional intercourse, as his business progressed, and whose denunciations and portrayals of the characters of the trio, as gained by his own experience, were effective in enabling him to master the risings of his generous instinct. Of course Mr. Skeggs himself was instigated as much by the hoped-for result to the Figgins family as by his interest in Frendzburgh. In the meantime the overtures made, very guardedly, to Skeggs, as undertaken by the attorney at the consultation, proved abortive, and were likely to continue so, as the attorney evaded any proposal for the liberation of Figgins, determined to retain the hold on this victim, at least until they had assured themselves of the safety of the still more dangerous one.

Many were the propositions of Figgins' indefatigable friend Ben Blower for his release. Detained much longer than anticipated, awaiting a cargo, and in default of which the good ship *Apame* had been chartered for the Brazils, her day of sailing was at length drawing nigh. Little more than a moiety of the required amount was the sum-total of all he could muster, for though the class of men amongst whom he formed his friendships were proverbially liberal, they were not often flush of money; he was consequently, to use his own phraseology, compelled to 'drop anchor,' in despair of effecting his purpose before

his departure. Leaning over the binnacle the evening on which he had arrived at this conclusion, thinking over the matter, as he had done scores of times previously, a thought occurred to him, which he berated himself for not entertaining before,—it was to obtain an advance of pay from the owners, a not unusual circumstance. But as the amount was larger than they might feel safe in giving, he would propose the captain as bail. On ascertaining the object for which the advance was required, no hesitation was made; and as he had been long in their employ, the owners advanced the required sum without the bail.

With a heart whose joy a prince might have envied, he sallied forth in his best rig, jumped into the first cab he overhauled, and, in an uncontrollable state of mind, bid the driver weigh anchor and bear up with all speed for Essex Street. But as the speed was not at all in harmony with his impatience, being, as he avowed, below four knots, when it ought to have been twenty, despite cabby's remonstrance he seized the 'ropes,' as he termed the reins, and in default of the whip, which the other held on to, stood up in the vehicle and endeavoured to propel the raw-boned animal with the slack thereof, compelling the spavined brute into a 'jolly round trot,' to the terror of foot passengers at the crossings, and every conveyance in his road. At one time he dumped into and over a hole under repair, whereby cabby had all but vaulted over the head of his sweating nag, only saved that equestrian performance by Ben's smartness, who, timely catching him by the scruff of his collar, thrust him back into his perch, and bid him 'hold hard if he did not want to go by the board;' and, eventually pursued by a Bow Street officer and a crowd of boys and men, under the delusion that the old knacker had bolted, a feat he had not attempted within the last ten years, he finally pulled up at Messrs. Nettle and Barrem's in search of Skeggs, with whom he had become acquainted since his visit to the prison, being referred to that individual by Figgins.

As Ben leaped out of the conveyance and entered the long passage leading to the office, he commenced singing the well-known seaman's ditty of 'Hurrah, my bonnie grog time of day!' which brought all the clerks at once to the door to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. Pushing his way through them, he advanced to Skeggs' desk, on which he threw a small canvas bag tied with a rope-yarn, and bid him count that; and thereupon, snapping his fingers and throwing his arms about, commenced sundry capers around the room, probably intended for a horn-

pipe, accompanying the motions of his feet and legs with a rollicking song, until, brought up by a deed box on the floor, he went broadside over it, and limped over to Mr. Skeggs.

'Bear a hand, mate, and let's have a ticket—or what ye call one o' them cape-asses—as 'll free the old hulk from the King's Docks.'

Whereat the jokey book-keeper suggested 'that the copying clerk would hand the gentleman the parchment deed he was engrossing,' which prompted the remark from Ben, with a knowing wink, that the said book-keeper 'would do well to take a turn and stand by before he ran a muck.'

With some difficulty Mr. Skeggs proceeded to make him comprehend that Figgins could not be liberated in so off-hand a manner; and excited considerable disgust when he stated that at least the day would elapse before the necessary legal discharge could be obtained. Upon which Ben proceeded to insist 'it was all gammon, and if they'd leave it to him, he'd tow him out afore they could say Jack Robinson. There was the money; what more did they want? It warn't law, he knew, to 'tain the old chap another minute; and if the King knowed it he wouldn't stand it.'

However, as Mr. Skeggs' assurances were supported by the junior partner of the firm, whom the unusual noise had attracted to the room, he reluctantly departed, with the promise that no time should be lost, and that he was to accompany Skeggs to the prison the next day for the purpose of declaring his old friend a free man. Upon the accomplishment of which he intimated a desire that Messrs. Nettle and Barrem and all their crew (looking round on the clerks) would meet him at the Ship Tavern, Wapping, and he'd stand treat to a jolly supper, and 'splice the main-brace' into the bargain.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE ADVENTURES OF A BRIGHT DAY AND A DARK NIGHT.

THE hackney coach that the next morning conveyed Mr. Skeggs and Ben to the prison, incited by the promise of an addition to the fare, drove through Fleet Street and over Blackfriars Bridge as fast as the constantly recurring impediments in those crowded thoroughfares would permit. Arrived in Great Surrey Street, where the road was less thronged, the jaded animals were urged to such extra speed as whipcord and constant tugging at reins could compel. When, however, they turned into the Borough Road from the Obelisk, the sailor, unable further to restrain himself, his impatience increased by his near approach to the Bench, despite the expostulations of Mr. Skeggs, thrust his body half out of the coach window, and commenced pulling and tugging at the handle of the door; but as that ingenious piece of mechanism ordinarily resists all efforts of any but the initiated to fasten, and still more persistently defies all attempts to unfasten, Ben for once found himself on a par with despised land-lubbers, whom he regarded as much lower in intelligence than seamen. Thus 'brought up,' his temper rose in proportion to the resistance, and, drawing in his head, with a very uncomplimentary address to the tackle, that he declared had fouled, the next moment he dashed his foot with such force against the door, that it flew open and banged against the side of the coach, whilst Ben went with an equal impetus backwards towards the opposite door; in which performance Mr. Skeggs did not come off scatheless, as the way in which he manipulated his arm and leg testified.

The driver was too intent in his endeavour to pass a loaded waggon to have heard the clash of the door, and as soon as Ben had gathered himself up, he expressed his satisfaction that the gangway was now clear, and thereupon forced down the steps

and stood thereon, his body swaying to and fro as he held on to the swinging door. As the coach neared the end of the road he leaped on to the pavement with an elastic bound, the momentum sending him nearly into the gutter; recovering himself in a trice, he gave chase to the coach, which a minute later landed Mr. Skeggs at the prison gates.

'Clear the coast, boys!' exclaimed the tar, as he pushed his way past the officials. And whilst Mr. Skeggs went with the officer to exhibit his papers, and settle any small claims that might stand on the prison books against Mr. Figgins, in the shape of extras, preceded by a turnkey, the sailor was conducted to his friend's room.

It so happened that Mr. Figgins, who was quite unprepared for the coming event, was at that instant perched on a wooden bench on the top of the table, vainly essaying to liberate a blue-bottle fly that had become entangled in a spider's web, and by his whirr, in his useless efforts to free himself, had attracted Mr. Figgins' attention. 'Come down, rat ye!' he exclaimed, making an extra effort on tip-toe, after one or two previous ineffectual attempts to reach the web, and whereat he had nearly come down himself, which, if he had, would have seriously interfered with his getting up again. 'Blowed if there's goin' to be hanybody a pris'ner in this mortal room 'sides me!'

'Ulloa, shipmate, what's up? Nearly missed stays that time. Come down; you're my prisoner. Sorry for you, old chap—can't help it, though;—shouldn't be so 'stravagant—it's all over with you. Come, bear a hand. Where's your chest and all your duds?' As he said this he hoisted Figgins on to the floor, and, espying his trunk, commenced thrusting the two or three articles that appertained to his friend therein; and before that personage could recover his astonishment, lifted the trunk on to his shoulder, and placed his hat on his head, and, by way of inducing it to remain there, bestowed a persuasive thump on the crown, which caused it to descend over Mr. Figgins' eyes, who thereupon made a desperate effort to relieve himself therefrom, but before he had more than partially succeeded, the sailor seized him by the arm and dragged him out of the room.

'Come, heave ahead, you old varmint! I'll teach ye to get in debt!'

'Hold on now, Ben,' remonstrated Figgins, with an attempt at resistance. 'Wait a minute till I 'splain.'

'No, ye don't; too late to 'splain. You've gone an' did it. Forrard, ye old villain.'

'Stop, Ben, I say; it were Bodkins as'—

'You're a 'stravagant old nabob. You've been living like a turkey-cock, and put the whole kit on short allowance; but we'll overhaul ye.'

'Stop, Ben,—what's up?—stop; you're a-dragging of me to bits.'

'I'll drag an' rope's-end ye too, if ye don't come along and haul out o' this. Shove on, or ye'll be 'hind time, and they'll have to put off swinging ye at the yard-arm till to-morrow, and the company 'll be disappointed.'

At this announcement Mr. Figgins caught hold of a post, and declared he would not move another peg till he knew what he was about; whereupon Mr. Skeggs, who had made all right with the officials, appeared on the scene, and, shaking him heartily by the hand, congratulated him on his having obtained his freedom, as did a few of the prisoners, who by this time had gathered around him.

As they jumped into the hack, the sailor bid the driver 'bout ship, and make sail for Wapping, whither, it should have been stated, on leaving the solicitor's office the previous day, he had conveyed the members of the Figgins family, with their few remaining articles of furniture and clothing, to hired lodgings. On the road Ben continued to chaff his old friend, who was now too happy himself to do otherwise than join in the humour of the kind-hearted mariner. In response to his appeal to be informed as to the means by which he had been so unexpectedly liberated, Mr. Skeggs proceeded to enlighten him, amid continued interruption by Ben, who ignored all obligations, and placed an injunction on Octavius going into particulars, thereby leaving Mr. Figgins to conjecture the full extent of his obligations to the generous sailor.

On their arrival at the new abode, the whole family went through a scene that need not be recorded, but which was not more enjoyable to themselves than to their two friends, and at the conclusion of which Ben was almost overwhelmed with protestations of gratitude, that he vainly strove to stay, avenging himself by not only kissing the children, but Mrs. Figgins herself, and not even excepting Arabella, bestowing a wink on Skeggs as he did so, who, however, could not see that it was necessary to carry the matter that far. After a little further

delay, Mr. Skeggs and the sailor took their departure, it being understood that they were to be there in the evening, in order to celebrate the jail delivery, for which Ben had taken care to provide the requisites.

'Do compose yourself, Arabella,' said Mrs. Figgins, as that young lady, in the exuberance of her spirits, had during the afternoon been doing all sorts of ridiculous things, and was just then picking up Toddles, whom she had knocked down in her hurry, after placing the kettle on the table instead of on the hob, and into which Mrs. Figgins, under an equal amount of unrepressed excitement, had thrown a teaspoonful and a half of Souchong, and was about adding one of Hyson before she discovered her mistake.

'Dear me, mother, what made you do that?'

'What made you? Of all things, to put the kettle on the table instead of the teapot!' and Mrs. Figgins nervously essayed to fish out the few leaves floating on the top of the water.

'Here, let me; I'll take it down-stairs and strain off the water,' said Miss Figgins, as she caught up the kettle and hurried off therewith, but on opening the door ran against a young gentleman, who had just then got to the head of the stairs. She started, and uttered a cry of surprise; and in her endeavour to prevent the kettle coming in contact with him, only did so at the expense of her white apron, on which she contrived to rub the sooty side. For a second both stood looking at each other confusedly, when the gentleman stammered out an apology, but which was waived by the young lady, who in her turn apologised for her awkwardness, and, as her eye fell on her apron, hastily untied and pulled it off.

The stranger requested to be informed if Mr. Figgins resided there, and, being answered in the affirmative, was invited to enter and be seated, whilst she went in search of him,—not, however, without taking a side-glance, as she left the room, at the handsome visitor. Mrs. Figgins in the meantime made the usual apologies for the tossed state of the room, and directed the children to cease their play and take their seats by her side. As Mrs. Figgins was not a woman of many words, she was silent for a few minutes, then ventured to remind the young gentleman that it rained last night, and that the streets were a little muddy still, especially in that neighbourhood, to which he assented, the thick coat of dirt on his well-polished boots bearing additional testimony to that fact. Before she could think of anything else

to say, Arabella returned with her father, to whom, on being introduced, he made himself known as Mr. Frendzburgh Trelawney.

'Eh, no!' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, as he advanced from the chair on which he was about to be seated, and surveyed the gentleman from head to foot. 'What name, sir?'

Frendzburgh repeated the name.

'Why, now, you don't mean to tell me as how?—'t ain't possible!' Figgins' face assumed a look of astonishment and incredulity.

'Fig,' interposed Mrs. Figgins, 'don't contradict the gentleman; he's a right to know his own name.'

'Vell, you see, I hain't recovered myself yet.' Mr. Figgins had reference to the state of his mind, which had risen to about the same temperature as that of the other members of the family on this memorable day.

'Have you been ill, sir?—confined to the house?'

'Vell, I were confined a little,' replied Mr. Figgins, casting his eyes on the floor, 'but not in that way.'

'O yes, I understand,' said Frendzburgh, comprehending immediately to what he alluded, as he called to mind the circumstances in which he had been placed, of which Mr. Skeggs had fully informed him.

'You don't remember me, Mr. Figgins?—that is, you don't recall any resemblance between the child and the youth?'

'Vell, vell, it bangs all! But you don't mean to say as how you're'—

'Figgins!' interposed Mrs. Figgins once more.

'Pa!' exclaimed Miss Arabella.

'Vell, I'm downright certain you'd not a-knowed him neither, if you'd ha' been me; vy, you weren't no bigger nor that ven I last seed you,' observed Mr. Figgins, as he lowered his hand to within a foot of the floor. 'And do you mind me?'

'Scarcely; and yet I have an indistinct recollection of being carried in the arms of some one not unlike you, though not so stout, and that one source of attraction was usually a stick of barley-sugar.'

'Ah, to be sure. Listen to that now!—that's the werry thing. I knows you too by that, and a scar above your wrist, that a live coal made as flew out of the fire.'

Frendzburgh turned up the cuff of his coat, and exhibited the identifying mark.

'Vell, now, who'd 'a' believed it?—there it is, as large as life. And how've you been all this time?' With that he gave his hand a hearty shake.

'I presume this is Mrs. Figgins?' said Frendzburgh, as he bowed to that lady, who rose and curtseyed.

'Ay, and that's my daughter'—Miss Figgins rose, and bowed in response to the gentleman's salutation,—'and I'm proud on 'em both; they're a hacquisition.'

'Oh, Fig!' exclaimed Mrs. Figgins.

'Oh, pa!' blushed Miss Figgins.

'Mr. Trelawney, you'll excuse my husband; it's natural to think well of your own; you know people's own geese are all swans.'

'Yes, and I'm the old gander,' remarked Mr. Figgins, laughing heartily at his coarse remark, but in which he was not accompanied.

'Mr. Figgins, I have to apologise for intruding on you so unceremoniously, but, having business at the hospital, I took the opportunity of coming a little farther to see you, having learned your direction from Mr. Skeggs, in order to express to you my deep sense of your fidelity to my late father and myself, and the great sorrow I experienced when I learned that you had undergone so much on that account.'

'O no, it warn't you; it were that deaf Bodkins. It warn't you at all as did it.'

'My great regret is that it has thus far been out of my power to come to your relief; but I trust the day is not distant when I shall be able to acknowledge such a warm friend in a tangible manner.'

'Mister Trelawney, you hain't got no occasion to tangle it; I done my duty.'

'Till such time I must ask your forbearance, and remain your debtor.'

'I'll not put ye in jail, Mr. Trelawney, if you never pays, which you don't owe nothing. Do 'e, mother?'

'Well, you know best, Fig; I didn't keep the books,' replied the cautious wife. 'Arabella would know better.'

'I'm afraid, Mrs. Figgins, if you looked through the accounts of the last few months you'd have a large bill against me.'

Mrs. Figgins had some vague idea that possibly there might be something, and which just then would be very acceptable, and when they got settled, she concluded they'd get Arabella to

look through the books. After some reference to the two smaller children, whose good-will Frendzburgh soon gained by taking one on each knee and chatting with them, a conversation ensued, in which Mr. Figgins went through reminiscences of old times, some of which were amusing, others irrelevant, and the rest imparting information interesting to his auditors, at the conclusion whereof Frendzburgh took his leave, but not before he had added another ingredient to their already full cup of happiness, by informing them that, provided there was no objection on their part, he had consented to accept an invitation, given by Mr. Skeggs, to make one of the circle of friends that, he understood, was that evening to share their felicitous reunion.

'There!' exclaimed Mr. Figgins, before his visitor had scarcely closed the door,—'there! what do you think of father now, Mrs. Figgins?—eh, Miss Figgins? Hain't I got reason to be proud of my hold connections? Warn't I right to stick by the young un? Do 'ee think now I hought to a' signed the papers as that 'ere 'Awkes wanted?' whereupon Mr. Figgins looked triumphantly round the room, pulled his high shirt-collar still higher and his capacious vest still lower, and walked up and down with his hands under his coat-tails, halting at every other turn to ascertain whether either of the ladies were prepared to dispute the question with him; but it was indisputable.

'He's very handsome,' remarked Mrs. Figgins.

''Ansome! Did ye hever see his beat? Remarkably 'ansome family they was—the Trelawneys; vy, the vimmen couldn't bear to look at the old gen'leman.'

'Why, father, were they afraid?' inquired one of the little ones.

'No, dear; but they couldn't take their heyes hoff again.'

But time was passing; the viands ordered by the sailor were to be got ready, and there was no time to lose, nor pains to be spared, since the entertainment was to be graced by so distinguished a young gentleman.

Never, on the assembly of the guests, which included Ben, Skeggs, and Frendzburgh, was there a supper sat down to and partaken of by a happier lot; and pleasant would it be, could the space be afforded, to tarry and do more than briefly mark the efforts to do the honours of the table and the evening in a patriarchal style by the elder Figgins, who, in the course of the discussion of the eatables, stated his belief 'that they had come down from the sky like the banannas to Noah's ark, which

nobody knew where it came from, as he remembered hearing tell of;' whereat one of the children volunteered the information that the article referred to was rained from heaven, but as it hadn't rained since yesterday, this couldn't be the same, as that wouldn't keep over-night, but which the aforesaid patriarchal Figgins thereupon avowed proved it was, as he was quite sure, from the way they were disappearing, none of the goodies before them would keep over-night.

A remarkable feature of the evening was the unusual garrulity and unprecedented sallies of Mrs. Figgins. Of course, Miss Arabella, being the only young lady in the company, if we except little Miss Toddles, had to run the gauntlet until she was almost overwhelmed with attention and compliments, kept in a succession of blushes by the droll remarks of the sailor, and his quizzical allusions to the presumed most enviable position of one of the young gentlemen seated on either side of her. These she endeavoured to parry by a significant reference to a 'black-eyed Susan' not far from thence. This, however, only brought Ben out with greater verve, who avowed he intended to follow the example of his friend Skeggs, and go in for a blue-eyed one, at the same time appealing to Frendzburgh for his opinion, who at once declared that the choice proved him to be a man of taste, and followed up one or two pretty, indirect references to the lady in question by proposing as a toast, 'The belle of the room;' but which was a little unfortunate, as it occasioned Mrs. Figgins, who, having got to talking, could not stop, to express her regret that they had not got another yet, the one on the shop door, that used to ring when a customer entered, being left thereon. Mr. Skeggs, too, was additionally facetious, except when an occasional unpleasant sensation was experienced on detecting the aforesaid blue eyes, after wandering round the room, stealing a glance at the handsome features of the young gentleman, who, though at the moment engaged with the contents of his plate, always happened to look up at that precise time, whereupon the blue eyes always dropped, and a tell-tale blush betrayed the consciousness of the *contretemps*.

Thus the evening passed, interspersed by several episodes in the life of the host, and yarns of the usual length spun by sailors. Of course pipes were introduced, but which Ben declined sanctioning until assured by the ladies that they had no objection thereto, but rather liked, which was fortunate, as the state of the room soon evinced. As Frendzburgh had not yet learned

that prevailing fashion, it afforded him ample leisure to attend to the female portion, whose admiration was increased by the opportunity thus offered of a better acquaintance with the fascinating youth, whilst it was a slight drawback to the unalloyed enjoyment of one of the smokers, at times apparent in the absence of mind exhibited in his response to some remark made by Ben or Figgins.

'Tavy,' said Mr. Figgins, whilst employed in refilling his long white clay with his favourite nigger-head, and taking the opportunity of that pause to relieve himself of the accumulated thinkings of the last few minutes,—'Tavy, I were thinking as hall lawyers is rogues.'

'Now, Mr. Figgins, I protest— Now, Mr. Ben,—now, really, ain't he too hard on us?' rejoined Skeggs.

'In course present company is allers excepted; I allers 'lows that,' added Mr. Figgins.

'If I'd my way,' said the sailor, 'I'd ship 'em all off, bag and baggage, without no 'ceptions, an' scuttle the craft 'mid channel.'

'You're right, Ben; and throw hold 'Awkes overboard to hanker 'em. Vy, they make a fellow swear he never seed himself afore, an' that he means what he don't mean.'

'But you see, sir,' remonstrated Skeggs, 'if they didn't do so the witness would wander till he lost himself.'

'Vell, and don't I say so, which is what he don't know vere he is. Didn't 'Awkes make me say in black and white as Mother Bodkins mauled me with her fore-harms?—which is a wacker; and course we lost the haction.'

'By force and arms,' interposed Mr. Skeggs.

'Vell, I hain't goin' to prevaricate about a word, vether it vere forcey or four arms. Howsomdever, I don't see the differ. But I'd like to 'a' seen her try it, that's all.'

'Avast there, comrade; don't get foul o' them craft, or you'll get the ballast knocked out o' ye in no time; learned that when I was a greenhorn arter my first cruise. You see, I thought everybody was glad I'd got back into port, and so I got to kissing all the gals I overhauled. Most on 'em took it kindly enough, 'cept one old wizened lady, an' she got frightened, and blessed if she didn't bring me afore the commodore at Thames Street, and he mulct me five shillings, more than it were worth by a long chalk.'

'Offence against the person,' remarked Mr. Skeggs.

'Did ye ever come across her again? and what's she doing

now?' inquired Mr. Figgins, rather enjoying Ben's expensive freak.

'Why, she's a-spoiling for want of kissing again,' replied Ben.

Thus the evening wore on, occasionally enlivened by a song, Mr. Skeggs treating them to one called 'My own Bluebell,' but which he pitched so high that he came to a full stop just as his voice had touched the ceiling, whereat Ben declared it weren't any manner of use to go to the mast-head to sing to a mermaid. Each of the males having followed suite, a united call was made on Miss Figgins, who, after the usual excuses, favoured the company with one appropriate to the occasion, entitled 'How happy are we!'

'Bella,' said Mr. Figgins as she concluded, with a look that seemed to say, 'I've got you this time,' 'say "ve"—"'appy are ve!"'

'Do what, pa?'

'Vy, don't you always tell me ven I says "v" to say "we," and *wicy wersy* ven I says "we" to say "v."'

'Deary me,' said Arabella, laughing at this confused way of putting it, and throwing her arms around his neck as she seated herself on his knee, 'you dear good-for-nothing old goose, I'll never make a scholar of you.'

This little manœuvre, notwithstanding Mrs. Figgins' reproof at the term applied to her father, appeared to delight everybody, since everybody, Mrs. Figgins included, joined the chuckling Figgins in enjoying the little struggle that ensued, as he endeavoured to blurt out that 'he had her there,' whilst she as persistently endeavoured to prevent him by smothering his lips with kisses and tickling him.

'I say, Skeggs, you'd have no objection to change places, and take it more kindly too,—eh?' said Ben, as he slapped him on the shoulder; but as Skeggs only smiled, and then looked grave, added, 'What's a matter?'

'Oh, he has melancholy thoughts,' chimed in Mr. Figgins, recovering from the effects of his struggle with his daughter; whereupon Ben repeated the thump, this time on his back, and bid him cheer up, for Bluebell would soon be coiling those kiars of hers around somebody else's neck; and then, in a whisper loud enough to be heard by the rest, begged to know when it was coming off, and he had no objection to be best man if they would hurry up, all of which had the effect of dissipating the melancholy thoughts, and substituting funny ones in their stead,

whilst the young lady became particularly engaged in a second attack on her papa.

'All over with 'em, Mr. Trelawney. Gone duck,—eh?' said the sailor.

'Afraid it's a bad case,' rejoined Frendzburgh.

'S'pose 't ain't no use calling in Doctor Trelawney?' joined in Mr. Figgins, whilst he held both of Arabella's hands that she was endeavouring to place over his mouth.

'No,' said the quick-witted sailor; 'that comes arterwards,' at the same time winking at Frendzburgh, into whose cheeks two little red spots made their appearance at the naughty suggestion.

'Do make them be quiet, ma,' remonstrated the young lady, as she rose from Mr. Figgins' knee, and went over and seated herself by the side of her mother. 'There, now, I'll leave you, father.'

'For which cause,' said the provoking Ben, 'a man shall leave his father—and—and shall join his wife, so that a man's foe'—

He stopped short, under the apprehension that there was something astray in his intended quotation.

'Shall be his wife,' chimed in Figgins, under the impression that he could correctly finish the sentence for his friend. 'No, I don't think that it's neither.' Mr. Figgins found himself in the same dilemma as his friend, being equally unpractised in scriptural phraseology. 'Howsomdever, Octavius 'll know all about it in time,—when the knot's tied, as the chap at Newgate said, just afore he were going to be hanged, and arter that he were a haltered man.'

'I think you are too hard upon our friends,' interposed Frendzburgh.

'May be we are,' remarked the sailor. 'Never mind, Miss; many an uglier girl than you has had to run the gauntlet at such times.'

'Umph!' responded Miss Arabella, 'that's a compliment, I'm sure.'

'Why, you wouldn't have me say a prettier,' rejoined the ready Ben, 'cos I'd like to see her.'

'Get out,' said Arabella, pretending to be displeased at this compliment.

At this juncture Frendzburgh looked at his watch, and informed Mr. Figgins that it was getting late, and that he must retire; whereat Mrs. Figgins expressed a fear that he had not enjoyed himself in such company, but which inference he pro-

tested against, reminding her that he had a long distance to go, or he would not have disturbed so pleasant a gathering, in which he had enjoyed himself exceedingly. As the neighbouring church clock at that moment struck eleven, the two other guests coincided with Mr. Trelawney that it was time to break up, each and all agreeing that the time had passed rapidly and enjoyably.

At the request of Mr. Skeggs, who, as they were going the same road, stated he'd overtake him if he'd walk slowly, Frendzburgh sauntered along, partly comprehending the cause of Mr. Skeggs' temporary detention, and which, it is needless to say, took place in the passage of Mr. Figgins' lodgings, for which ample opportunity was afforded, as Ben had become engaged in telling the old folks a long yarn, that, as it interested no one in particular, for that reason occupied the longer time to make interesting.

The street was very quiet, and the night very dark. Here and there a dim light glimmered through the half-open door of a low tavern, out of one of which, close by Figgins' residence, issued two sailors, half-seas-over (to employ a nautical phrase), whose first act, after looking around, was to make an effort to re-enter the place they had just quitted, but which they were prevented doing, the door having in the meantime been fastened inside. After satisfying themselves, by unsuccessful assaults thereon, that their efforts were fruitless, they staggered off arm-in-arm, singing as they proceeded down the street, 'When the stormy winds do blow.'

The dull oil lamps, that at extreme distances were meant to afford light along the street, cast their yellow glare but a few paces around the posts, it not being worth the lamplighter's while to clean the glasses of their greasy, sooty coats, since the days of such lamps were numbered by the introduction of gas, which was fast superseding them. Their sombre light only served to render all beyond them the more dense. Here and there the rushlight of some retiring apprentice, or other occupant of a garret, flickered through the window on to an opposite chimney, whilst now and then, through the chinks of old shop shutters that refused to come close together, a faint streak issued, denoting that a dealer in slops or ship chandlery, who had kept his shop open until there was not the remotest chance of another customer turning up, still lingered within, and then the sudden disappearance of the streak intimated that he too had retired. An occasional 'Ship ahoy!' sounding from the river-side, indicated

that some ship's captain, or sailor on leave, was hailing a boat from his vessel to take him aboard. But, save the sound of Frendzburgh's footfall on the side-walk, no other noise was heard on the street.

Suddenly, at the narrow lane or court on the west of the 'Orchard,' a figure enveloped in a cloak, and a slouched hat that concealed his features, emerged therefrom, and advanced to the curb, where it stood, and looked cautiously down the street. In a few seconds it was joined by another, between whom and the first a few words passed. Whereupon the former returned to the court, and the latter muffled his face, and crossed the street, slightly in advance of Frendzburgh, and, turning quickly round, passed him so closely as to rub against him, at the same time taking a hurried glance at his face.

Frendzburgh started. Was it the unnecessarily close scrutiny the man appeared to make, the loneliness of his situation in such a neighbourhood, or what? He stopped, and turned to look after the figure; it had re-crossed the road and turned into the narrow lane, but almost immediately reappeared, followed by the other, and, keeping close to the houses, walked rapidly in the direction he was going. As he had proceeded some little distance from Figgins' establishment, after a slight hesitation he decided to slowly return and meet Skeggs, but had not gone many yards before he fancied he heard his step, and was about to turn again, when his arms were tightly grasped, and, before he could offer any resistance, were bound firmly behind his back, whilst as speedily a gag was fastened over his mouth, and he found himself surrounded by five powerful, bronzed, apparently seafaring men, whose language showed they were foreigners. By a few broken utterances, accompanied by menacing gesticulations, he was made to understand that any resistance would only lead to more violent measures, in confirmation whereof they significantly pointed to the long knives or dagger-shaped blades sheathed and strapped around their waists. Frendzburgh, however, despite their threats, refused to move, upon which he was seized by his pinioned arms, and forced along, the sound of approaching feet causing them to accelerate their movements. Arrived at the lane leading to the 'New Stairs,' they dragged him down a few yards, and, tripping him, held him down with their knees, whilst they endeavoured to tie his legs, with the intention of carrying him to a boat, in which a man was seated, awaiting their arrival.

The footsteps that had expedited their movements were Skeggs', whose lengthened detention caused him to start in a run, in order to overtake his friend, and who came upon them just as they turned into the lane. Hearing the scuffle, he retreated some paces and crossed to the other side, when, looking over, he concluded it was a drunken sailor being conveyed to his vessel by the more sober portion of the crew, and re-crossed a little further on, in order to overtake Frendzburgh, who was to keep on that side. He had only run a short distance when it occurred to him he must have passed him in the dark, and with that conclusion retraced his steps to the place where the men were still engaged in their effort to bind their captive. With a desperate effort to free himself, he had slipped one hand from the ligature, and before it could be again secured had torn the muzzle off his mouth, and at that moment shouted 'Murder!' In his fright Skeggs again rushed to the other side of the road, but as he did so it occurred to him forcibly that he knew the voice, and then that it was Frendzburgh's. Animated by a courage not natural to him, he ran back to the head of the lane, and stretched his head to ascertain what he could without venturing in too close proximity. It was, however, too dark at that distance to make out more than the fact that several men were struggling with some one on the ground, and as he could not divest himself of the idea that caused him to return to the spot, at the same time unable to screw up fortitude sufficient to interpose, it occurred to him that the next best thing was to shout,—he had heard of wonderful results from shouting. So Mr. Skeggs shouted,—that is, owing probably to the state of his nerves, he gave what was intended for a shout, it bearing greater affinity to a faint scream, but which, as it had the effect of alarming the ruffians, as well as himself, he tried it again, this time more effectively. He did not try it the third time, however, for the simple reason that a muffled figure, of whose proximity he had not until then the remotest idea, gave him a dig in the back of his neck, that caused poor Skeggs to take such an involuntary forward movement, that he went clean over the passage before he finally stretched his carcase across the opposite curbstone, and there lay without any further attention on the part of his assailant, who doubtless concluded he had settled him for the required period. So intent had the muffled figure been on the performance of this manœuvre, that he was unaware that, attracted by Skeggs' first effort, and hurried on by the second,

another party had appeared on the scene, and before he could return to the shade of the wall he found himself in the grasp of a powerfully-built man, who demanded what he did that for, and, without waiting a reply, struck the figure a blow that sent him staggering against the wall. The muffled man gathered himself up, threw his cloak back over his shoulders, and squared up to his assailant in a scientific manner. Ben—for it was he who had thus arrived so opportunely—cautioned him 'to keep a good cable length off, if he didn't want to be run foul of.'

Without regarding the caution, the other made a desperate lunge that would have sent Ben to measure his length by the side of Skeggs,—who just then was beginning to realize his situation,—but with that nimble, supple movement, so natural to a seaman, he swayed to one side, and, instead, rendered it somewhat difficult for his opponent to retain his own gravity. For a minute or two the two stood at bay, neither in a hurry to renew the contest, yet warily preparing therefor; during which, Skeggs, contrary to the expectation of his assailant, crawled off to a safer distance, regained his feet, and next the other side of the road, where he commenced vigorously rubbing his neck, and applying his hand to an examination thereof.

One of the men engaged in securing Frendzburgh, happening to look towards the street, became aware of the contest taking place at the head of the lane, and thereupon, leaving two of their comrades to guard their prisoner, with two others ran to the assistance of the cloaked man, under whose directions they were evidently acting. As they approached they drew their knives, and in broken English threatened Ben to bury them in his body, unless he instantly decamped.

At sight of this, Skeggs, not caring for a repetition of his last experience, took to his heels, and ran full tilt into the two sailors before alluded to, who, cruising about the street in the hope of finding a tavern still open, were on their way back.

'Shiver my timbers!' spurted out the most sober of the two, as he seized hold of the affrighted Skeggs, who thereupon gave himself up for lost, not doubting they were a portion of the same gang, 'couldn't ye steer clearer of a chap than that? You've a'most knocked a hole in my bread-basket.'

'Stand by, mate!' exclaimed his companion, before Skeggs could appeal for mercy. 'We'll cry quits if he stands treat.'

In another instant Skeggs' arms were locked in those of the sailors, and they reeled on towards the lane at which the un-

equal contest had commenced. A glance into the faces of the honest tars reassured him, and in excited language he tried to make them sensible of what was taking place. The men were sobered at once, and, as they let go his arms, bade him follow, and dashed across the road in time to rescue Ben, who had caught up a broken boat-hook, lying inside an old wherry, and was manfully keeping the triad at bay, but unwittingly exposed to the cowardly attack of one of the two left in charge of Frendzburgh, who, creeping stealthily behind, had raised his formidable weapon with the intention of plunging it into his back. Taking in the danger on the instant, the first arrival exclaimed,

'Avast there, you Johnny Crapeau! Fair play's a jewel!' and with that he threw himself with such force against the treacherous foreigner, that the man staggered and fell. The knife flew from his hand, and was immediately caught up by the sailor, but who in his turn was compelled to stand on his defence, as the sight of their prostrate companion caused two of Ben's attackers to transfer their attentions to him. 'Come on, you parley-voos. Bear a hand, mate,' said he, addressing his comrade, 'and take a reef in them mounseers' sky-sails.'

Relieved for the nonce, Ben was about to grapple with the one to whom he was thus temporarily opposed, but was compelled to retreat to the wall, owing to the cloaked man coming to the other's aid. With great celerity he managed to prevent a dash upon himself by the dexterous use of the fragment of the boat-hook, which was nothing more than the upper half of the handle, the hook and point broken off, leaving the rusty iron socket at the end.

Meanwhile the prostrated man, of whose knife the sailor had possessed himself, had jumped to his feet, and, in default of his weapon, hastily slipped off his jacket, and, holding it before him in a somewhat similar mode to a matador at a bull-fight, rushed on the sailor, and received the lunge of the murderous weapon in his garment. The force of the collision caused both to reel and fall, unfortunately the sailor underneath, but still retaining a firm grasp of the knife, whilst the Spaniard pressed the garment in which it was entangled over his face.

His comrade, who had come to the help of the sailor at the first call, was unable to assist, having now more than he could do to defend himself against the attacks of the other two, before whom he was gradually retreating, with nothing but his strong glazed hat to parry their thrusts.

With a desperate effort the first sailor threw his adversary off, freed his face, and, dealing him a heavy blow with his fist, rendered him powerless; then jumped to his feet, and in one glance took in the dangerous position of his comrade; uttering a cry of cheer he rushed to his assistance, but had scarcely done so when he was again warned to look to himself, as the remaining man, left in charge of their prisoner, having come up, was making for him with savage impetuosity. 'Avast there!' cried the sailor, as he flourished his knife, and turned boldly upon the ferocious man. 'Avast, or I'll lay you alongside of your mate!' pointing to the man still lying on the ground; which procedure arrested the advancing man, evidently under the impression that he was dead.

Whilst this was going on, seeing that all were engaged, Skeggs reappeared on the scene, from which he had kept aloof, awaiting some favourable turn of affairs, and, unnoticed by the contestants, crept down to the captive. To whip out his penknife and cut the strings of the gag was but the work of a moment; then, instructed by Frendzburgh, he was about to set to work to unfasten the rope around his legs, but at that instant he chanced to look up, and discovered the man who had been left in charge of the boat stealthily approaching. Skeggs jumped to his feet, uttered a gruff 'Who goes there?' and, under the conviction that a fresh gang was coming to the aid of the rest, fled; as did the advancing man, no less alarmed at discovering any one there, and disappeared down the stairs to the boat.

The unequal contest was beginning to tell against Ben and his gallant allies, who must have shortly succumbed, but that Skeggs, on reaching the street, espied a guardian of the night turning into the road at a short distance, and thereupon ran to assure him that he was under a mistake in proclaiming, according to custom, 'All's well.' As soon as the said guardian had become convinced by Skeggs' frantic gesticulations that something *was* wrong, he sprang his rattle, which, after a short interval, was answered by another rattle, and then by a third; whereupon the trusty watchman presumed he might safely advance, which he did with praiseworthy caution, not arriving at the spot until joined by his brother officers, whose rattles, in conjunction with his own, were now going at a most exhilarating rate, and whereat every window and door along the line of their progress was thronged with night-caps or *sans culotted* individuals.

The noise had, of course, made the gang aware that their stay any longer there was out of the question, and by the time the 'civic guard' appeared at the corner of the lane, all had decamped. The man in the cloak ran in the direction of the Tower, whilst the rest dragged their disabled companion down to the boat, into which they leaped, and pushed off with all speed. As the rapidly-pulled oars sent the boat gliding down the river under cover of the darkness, a voice, that Skeggs, as he stood at the head of the stairs with the watchman, declared to be as like Captain Lejette's as two peas, was heard singing, to a rollicking tune, a verse of one of Goethe's lyrics,—

'I've set my heart upon nothing, you see,
Hurrah!
And so the world goes well with me,
Hurrah!
And who has a mind to be fellow of mine,
Why, let him take hold and drain the wine.'

There was a short pause; either they had fouled something, or the singer was suiting the action to the word. Then he resumed—

'These mouldy lees of wine—Hurrah!'

'Hurrah!' responded the rowers; and soon the sound of voice and oars was lost in the distance, and out of reach of interference, much to the disappointment of the valiant functionaries, who, as they returned and halted at the head of the lane, elicited the admiration of a small knot of persons who had gathered there, by flourishing their cutlasses in a frightful manner before returning them to their sheaths, and, after these belligerent demonstrations, congratulated each other in very audible tones on the success of their stratagem in driving a very large body of river pirates into the Thames, and then informed the bystanders that it was most fortunate that they had arrived at the scene of action at the precise moment they did, as the consequences to the citizens of Wapping might otherwise have been fearful. As it was, eleven bodies at least must have gone to the bottom of the river, but which the third doughty warrior disputed, he having counted thirteen, to which correction, as it did not minify the account, the other two very properly offered no objection.

During the performance of the above exploit, Ben and the two sailors, all of whom bore some ugly proofs of the severity

of their mauling, had liberated Frendzburgh's arms and legs. Much bruised by his rough usage, he had some difficulty in rising, and had to be assisted to the street, supported by Ben and the two sailors, who insisted on escorting him and Skeggs as far as the Minories, where they saw the two into a cab that chanced to be returning from a late fare. Frendzburgh's continued protestations of lasting gratitude to the three jolly tars for their timely assistance, as they wended their way to the Minories, was as continuously disavowed, each averring he was amply repaid in the glorious opportunity of overhauling those foreign craft, and dwelling with pardonable egotism on their several achievements, in which, carried off by the general elation, Mr. Skeggs claimed to come in for a modicum of the honours, especially for his thoughtfulness and wonderful presence of mind in going in search of the redoubtable warriors whose timely arrival decided the fortune of the day,—if this is not a misnomer, it being midnight.

On their way to the Strand, very naturally they endeavoured to unravel the meaning of this extraordinary adventure, but which, the more they attempted, appeared the more inexplicable, —each, however, agreeing in the impression that the man in the cloak was no stranger to either; which was further confirmed by Mr. Skeggs recurring to his fancied recognition of the voice of the singer in the boat. By the time they arrived at the surgeon's, they had hinted their suspicions that the stranger bore a strong resemblance to the assistant, but were dumbfounded on the door being opened to them by that personage, who merely observed that the surgeon was annoyed at Frendzburgh's remaining out so late, and, turning quickly round without saying anything further, retired to the surgery. Left thus by the surly assistant to grope his way in the dark to his bed-room, whilst ascending the stairs he thought he overheard the latter in conversation with his principal.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE CLOSING SCENE AT GRUMBLEBY.

THE sun was descending towards the horizon, and a grey mist rising up from the land was cooling the heated atmosphere, whilst in the north the sky was gradually curtained by greyish, vapoury clouds, that crept slowly along towards the west, until, met by a current of air, they veered off in an easterly direction, and in their passage under higher and denser clouds assumed a darker aspect; then condensing, they could be seen descending in a downpour, on which the declining rays painted a broken, scarcely perceptible, rainbow.

There was an unusual stillness in and around the Hall,—not a movement nor a sound, save here and there in the garden the drowsy hum of a thrifty bee, arrested on its homeward flight by the scent of flowers that invited to tarry and enrich its load, or when some hurrying bluebottle fly, tempted by the open window above, dashed into the heated room and made a few swift circuits around, as indicated by his advancing and receding sonorous buzzing, and then as rapidly darted out through the same opening by which he entered.

On the common, a few sheep, the remnant of a larger flock, tired of grazing on the scant herbage, too well cropped by rival flocks of geese, not to include donkeys and pigs, owned by the surrounding cottagers, were quietly lying or standing, and, with the sheepish look more marked on these occasions, were chewing their cud. A few boys in a sitting posture reposed just outside the boundary gate, whilst the majority of their schoolmates were stretched in groups about the playground, under shelter of the walls or the trees in the rookery, too listless to engage in sport.

The oppressive heat of the day had somewhat intensified the fever of the sick boy, who was visibly sinking. The opened window and door had done little or nothing until now towards

cooling the temperature, and he had, as a consequence, tossed from side to side, with a heavy breathing that sounded through the passage along the bed-rooms, and could be heard even at the foot of the stairs. Old Nanny had sat by his side during the greater portion of the day, bathing his hot temples and hands, or wetting his parched lips, refusing to be relieved or to allow any other to take her place. More than once had she bowed at his bedside to plead for his restoration to consciousness, yet still the glazed eye and vacant look showed that he regarded her unconsciously, and nothing but short incoherent utterances responded to her whispered interrogatories.

As the evening approached, and the atmosphere cooled by the rising mist and gathering clouds, the internal fire that was consuming the lad seemed slightly to abate, and he became easier, and the delirium ceased, until at length his mind became more composed and collected, and he fell into a quiet doze. Nanny drew the open window a little lower down, and gently lifted his arms and placed them under the bed-clothes; then, assuring herself that his sleep was sound, stooped down, pressed her lips to his forehead, and, invoking a blessing, partially closed the door, and descended the hall stairs as noiselessly as her thick-soled shoes would allow, and sought Mrs. Kearas, to notify her that she was obliged to return home.

Scarcely had she turned the first landing, before, in 'stocking feet,' Milly, who had been impatiently awaiting her departure, glided out of the adjoining room, and stood by the bed the old woman had just left. Anxiously she peered into the boy's face, the twitching whereof, now and again accompanied by a faint moan, told that it was not the sound sleep his late watcher had surmised. An occasional sentence indicated the direction in which his disturbed senses were moving. It was in the old channel, which, could unintermitting thought wear, would by this time have been deeper than the bed of the river whence he landed on his first and only voyage, and whence, upon the waters of the sea, along the coast, he was ever voyaging towards a home which, though not strictly his, was the only one he ever knew, where life was a gambol, and where those around whom his heart's tendrils entwined with such tenacity were ever present to him. To him it had been the centre around which everything good radiated, the magnet to which his soul was attracted, the star that led him on in hope. In them was concentrated the perfection of human nature, and they were interwoven with his

every thought, and it was these thoughts that had preserved him, had prevented his stagnating, or assimilating to the characters amid whose baneful influence he was thrown, and whose grossness served to heighten, to an undue degree, the virtues of those he so tenderly loved.

Such is the beauty, the blessedness of early training. The patrician elegance of form and feature may be faultless, the precociousness of the mental powers marvellous, the ingenuousness of the early life unrebukable; but the classic features may change, may even retain little if any of their pristine beauty, the premature intellect give place to a demented brain, and the frank, artless nature surrender itself to the dominancy of repulsive passions, and this of one *made* in the image of his glorious 'Maker.' But wherefore? If not the physical, cannot the moral beauty mature into a perfection of loveliness? No; there is a worm, a cancer at its inchoation that forbids the hope, for the strength thereof is too enfeebled, its power too weakened. But trained as enjoined by the standard of perfection,—God's Word,—nor time nor age shall deplete the priceless jewel of its worth, nor dim it of its radiance; the corporeal may develope into the more rigid, austere outline, yet even that will be modulated or toned down into grace and symmetry, the intelligent exponent of moral power and spiritual life. Exceptions there may be, they follow every rule, but thereby confirm it.

How sweet the memories, almost ethereal in their resurrection, that are revived in the matronly daughter or manly son, whose maturing graces still recall the gentle, loving girl, or dashing, generous, open boy, who honoured themselves by an unquestioned obedience and truthfulness, and yet were none the less a girl or boy,—whose gushing hearts and boisterous gabble, or gleeful shout and fawn-like bounds to caressing arms, attempered the worry and friction of everyday life, and left no place for late repentant sighs. By all that is calculated to throw a halo over lives that otherwise may become a blight, and that will aid in causing our sun to set in cloudless serenity, let us consecrate to God His gift, the child committed to our training for heaven or—yes, or—for we cannot divest ourselves of the terrible responsibility of the alternative. Render therefore unto God the things that are God's, and which can be only accomplished through the atonement,—'Without me,' said the Saviour, 'ye can do nothing.'

These, however, were not Milly's reflections as she stood

watching the restless boy, though she had wit enough to know, gained by a pleasurable experience, that the lad on whom she gazed was better fitted for a better place than where he was, or a better companionship than those with whom he was associated. She had, however, remained in that position about as long as it would have occupied her had she so meditated, when she was disturbed, and called away to the window of the next room by a noise at the front garden gate.

A faint rumbling, as of a carriage rolling along the hard, dusty road, fell upon the sharp ears of the boys outside the gate looking on to the common. Thereupon, incited to apply their faces to the parched ground, each prophesied of the particular kind of vehicle whose vibrations, as some asserted, announced the approach of a loaded waggon or other heavily-laden team, whilst others insisted it was a herd of cattle, each persisting in his own prognostication, until the clattering, hollow sound of hoofs over the bridge across the Greta caused all to jump to their feet, and presently a post-chaise, driven at a rapid pace, rounded the road, and drove up the common to the front entrance of the Hall. This unprecedented circumstance, as well as the style of the conveyance, threw all into ecstasies, and, being speedily communicated throughout the playgrounds, as speedily drew every boy within hail to revel in the sight of the novel conveyance. As the coach had driven close to the gate, they were unable to obtain a view of its occupant on the egress therefrom; but as the vehicle was afterwards driven into the further gate, through which it entered, a general rush was made to the other end of the grounds, whence, climbing on the enclosing walls, another view of the wonderful carriage could be obtained.

Within the establishment an unusual commotion prevailed, and it soon transpired that the visitation was in connection with the sick boy. Instant preparations were about to be made for his transfer to one of the state-rooms, reserved for any such rare and unforeseen event, but the eagerness of the visitor prevented its being carried out, and afforded time only to hastily throw a white quilt over the bed-clothes, and a hasty thrusting aside of one or two articles that encumbered the room.

The twilight was affording but a shadowy perception of the articles in the store-room, when Willie opened his eyes with that abruptness sometimes occurring with the sick. Soon he became conscious of the presence of a strange female, seated on the chest at the window, and slightly turned his head to discover

whether it was Nanny still remaining at her post. The movement attracted the attention of the stranger, who thereupon removed her close bonnet, and rose and bent over him, and in a low, tremulous voice pronounced his name, at the same time imprinting an impassioned kiss on his cheek. He opened his eyes to the full with an expression of surprise, and looked into her face with an eager look.

'Do you know me, my darling? are you better?' said the strange woman, as the tears coursed each other down her cheeks.

The lad took his eyes off her for a moment, looked hastily round the room, and fastened them on her again. Was it not a dream, then? Was the scene through which he had been passing in his fitful sleep a reality? Was he home? No, not exactly in Aunty Fanny's room,—it was the surgery. Did he sleep there all the time, ever since he saw that lady? The effort to comprehend it was too much, and his mind wandered. Still, with his eyes piercingly fixed on her, he exclaimed, 'Don't let him!—he's going to send me away! quick, tell Mr. Grumphy to carry me back to Aunty. Is Mary gone?—poor Mary. Did he send her away too? Never mind;—don't bring her here, I am going to—see!' he seemed to be following some object until his gaze rested on the opposite wall, when he smiled, and then closed his eyes, his lips still moving.

The convulsive sobs of the mysterious lady, as she threw herself on the foot of the bed, told how deeply she was moved. With a strong effort to overcome her feelings, she rose and re-seated herself on the chest and clasped her hands in agony, but, unable to endure the conflict, she threw herself on her knees by his bedside, and, as she drew his hand into hers, kissed it again and again. Then, in as subdued a manner as she was able to assume, said, 'My darling boy, don't you know me?—did you never see me before? I've come to take you away—home.'

The boy opened his eyes, once more gazed intently into her face, and said in a plaintive tone, 'Are you my mother? I've lost my mother. Did you know her? Go—go—tell her I love her. Oh, mother dear, so long lost!—love *you*, that I will. Are you my mother? She's gone again;'—the deeply-stricken woman had sunk to the floor, and as he turned his head from side to side in search of her, he repeated, 'Gone again!—mother!—mother!'—he stopped and listened. 'She's gone—she's gone. Dead—dead—all dead. She kissed me out of heaven, but why did she cry?—do they cry there?'

By a strong effort she rose to her knees, and wrung her hands, as she exclaimed in pitiful tones, 'Oh, that I ever lived to see this hour!'

'I thought you were gone back,' said the boy, as she reappeared. 'Have you come to take me up there, did you say?'—he raised his thin long arm and pointed upwards with his taper finger,—'up there? Do you love Jesus? so do I. Did He send you for me?—let's go. Hush! do you hear it?—how beautiful! Again,—no, it's the old church bell that tolled for the master, and they are burying him in the churchyard,—ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' The lady shuddered. 'Sh-o-o-o!—it's tolling again, don't you hear it?'—he put his finger to his ear. 'Look! look! how white it looks! it's me!—Get in, get in,—there's room, we'll lie side by side. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust!' He closed his eyes. A few hysterical sobs told how sorely that heart-riven woman was racked. Again he raised his eyes and drew a long sigh, and in a more collected tone, that indicated a return from his wandering, said, 'Did they tell you I was dying? Thank you, dear lady; you were kind to come and see me.'

He stretched out his hand, and she clasped it in both hers, and exclaimed, 'Oh, Willie, you must not, cannot die! I'll take you home to Aunty.'

'Aunty!' said the boy in quicker tones, 'will you? O no! I'm too ill. Will you tell her—I love her as ever,—and Mary,—and Mr. Grumphy,—and—and Frendzburgh, and—that's all—I think.' He stopped.

'And don't you love me, Willie, my darling?' She rose and leaned over him and kissed his lips, and waited the response with eagerness.

But the whole scene had been too exhausting,—the arrested vitality was all expended. She put her ear to the quivering lip as it parted, but there was no audible word. She raised her head to catch the expression of his eye, but it was glazed; the lids fell slightly, there was a gurgling sound, one long-drawn faint breathing, another still fainter, and the weary was at rest. A cold tremor passed over the unhappy woman, and she fell senseless on the bed.

A few hours later, amid the torrents of the storm that had been gathering, and which had now set in, rendering the night pitchy dark and dreary, the post-chaise drove from the Hall with the broken-hearted traveller.

Four days afterwards, dressed in their Sunday apparel, the

boys, formed into line and preceded by the elders of the establishment, once more wended their way to the churchyard, which was about to receive another contribution from Grumbleby. The reaper had stepped wide this time: the last swing of the scythe had toppled over the full-eared stalk, now the sickle had cut down the tender blade. The sturdy oak, matured, went down with one blow of the grim woodman's axe, this time the sapling is whittled; but both have been garnered into one common receptacle, the 'greedy grave.' The little casket, borne by six boys, contrasted strangely with the huge unwieldy coffin that last emerged from the same gates. But more seriously than then the youthful *cortege* bear their little schoolmate to the burial ground of centuries, another claimant to a freehold there.

> 'With thy rude ploughshare, Death, turn up the sod,
> And spread the furrows for the seed we sow;
> This is the field and acre of our God,
> This is the place where human harvests grow.'

Arrived at his last resting-place, they lowered the coffin into its miniature grave with a hushed and unusual solemnity, a tribute to the gentle spirit that had left them. Here and there a sigh was heard, whilst, on the outside of the circling mourners, some stifled sobs, which called a tear into more eyes than one, proclaimed how acutely poor Mape sorrowed at his loss. A few particles of mould, dropped on the coffin lid as the man of God uttered the accompanying words, reminded some that more heavily fell the clods upon the master's remains; but none realized the more apt significancy of the sentence, 'He cometh up and is cut down like a flower,' or the more truthful import of the succeeding words of the service, 'In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

As anticipated by the boys, that evening the staple girdle-cake formed their carnal consolation, a blender of the common sorrow with the common joy. And, as the appetite increases by what it feeds on, so the tantalized stomachs of the Grumbleby mourners, like bloodhounds on the scent, soon set them hounding up every boy with a cut finger or wounded toe, condolingly setting him apart as the probable procurer of the next 'funeral baked meats,' or girdle-cake. But at that evening's supper-table there was an angular piece of cake, and a tin of sky-blue, upon which more than one boy cast a wistful look; its rightful owner

had failed to appear at the table. From the greedy looks of the opposite lad, his design upon the unclaimed dainty was fully comprehended by the boys on either side thereof, who, as they crammed the last morsel of their own allotment into their mouths, simultaneously grabbed thereat, to the disgust of the opposite, who thereupon demanded shares, or he'd tell; whereupon a compromise was effected, and each expressed his conviction that it was a good thing for Hardfag that his absence had thus been prevented coming to the usher's notice.

During the few days that had intervened between Willie's death and burial, poor Mape had rarely been seen, except at school or meal hours. Inconsolable at his loss, the bereaved lad wandered through the plantation, or secluded himself in places frequented by his departed friend. The penknife, Willie's dying gift, was rarely out of his hand; and he would throw himself on the ground in a paroxysm of grief, and address it as though it were the boy himself.

The day of the funeral, contrary to what might have been expected, he appeared less dejected, but there was an unusual savageness in his manner, that brought him into unpleasant collision with one or two of the bigger boys. After the funeral he had again disappeared, and, as the evening advanced, he regained the churchyard, which he cautiously entered at the farthest side, and began stealthily to approach the newly-made grave. He had not gone a dozen paces before a movement at a short distance caused him to look in that direction, and to fancy he saw something glide behind a monument. He stopped, and kept his eye thereon, but as there was no further appearance, he renewed his advance to the grave, occasionally halting to look towards the monument; presently he became conscious that something had darted thence to the shelter of a large gravestone. His superstitions began to operate, and he was about to retreat, when the voices of some villagers in conversation along the road somewhat restored his failing courage, and he stooped, and crept on all-fours to the nearest tombstone, where he crouched and listened. Again he ventured forth, and, bending low, advanced, dodging from stone to stone, until he got within sight of the grave, and was about to take a direct course thereto, when, as he turned to take another look towards the scene of his disturbance, his attention was attracted to a stone between himself and the monument. In lieu of being rounded at the top, it was curved from the centre into two shoulders, the apex in the

midst rising like a neck, on the top of which was a head,—not a ball,—a strange, wild, live head; on which, however, his eyes had scarcely fallen before it disappeared. He was rivetted to the spot, unable to move, and might have remained so awhile, but that a succession of shrill screams, and the rush of something towards him, sent the odyllic fluid through him with the celerity of an electric discharge, and in another moment he took to his heels and fled towards the road, under the full conviction that the ghouls of the graveyard were in hot pursuit. On went Mape, terror lending wings to his speed. On came the weird pursuers, faster, nearer, closer, and over Mape went, tripped by a grass-tangled mound, and uttering a cry of horror. In the twinkling of an eye, one after the other, two of the monsters, pursued by a third, rushed past him, and at a short distance leaped on to a flat tombstone, resting on four pillars. Harfagr gathered himself up for a further flight to gain the road, when a fresh outburst from the creatures in his front arrested him, and he turned to flee in the direction whence he had come, but had scarcely commenced to run, when a repetition of the cries, followed by vigorous attacks on each other, a renewed chase, and an ascent up a tree, brought him to a stand-still, as he recognised the cause of his terror. To pick up clods and stones and commence a vigorous assault on the tree was the work of a minute, and the next three felines rapidly descended, and as speedily made tracks for the road, and disappeared over the fence.

Recovered from his fright, Mape turned to retrace his steps, vexed that he had been fooled by three wretched cats, whose vagaries anywhere else it is not probable would have disturbed him, and to which he now attributed his first cause of alarm, and came to the conclusion that the round-headed gravestone was nothing else than one of the said cats posed thereon. Just then another scream from the far end of the enclosure had almost started him off again, but as it died away in the distance he became partially reassured, and, stamping his foot on the ground by way of stimulation, addressed himself as a 'downright madlin;' adding one or two derisive taunts, and requesting to be informed what he was afraid of; then looked around and tried to whistle, but it wouldn't come. It was evident that his reasoning had not quite settled the matter, for he decided, before going to the object of his visit to this lonely place, to take a circuit, and from a safe distance inspect the stone with the moveable head, but on doing so could find nothing to otherwise account for the

phenomenon than his aforesaid surmise of the cat seated thereon. Now, although this was a very plausible deduction on the part of Mape, had he looked behind him at the moment he commenced his flight, or even at its conclusion,—two very improbable feats,—he would have become aware of a fact that would have disabused him of this erroneous conclusion, and which, if it did not add to his speed, that being already at its utmost, would certainly have contributed to his terror; for at the instant that the odious screams were shrieked out, a phantom arose from behind that veritable stone, and at equal speed, incited thereto by the same cause that lent additional impetus to himself, it rushed first towards and then away from him, to the shelter of the church, in whose shade it disappeared, and thereby accounts for his finding nothing at the headstone.

At the conclusion of his inspection, Mape turned towards the spot now sacred to him, and as he stood over it, gazing on the sodded mound, there came back the old deep feeling, and it worked and worked at his poor riven heart, until, with a passionate burst of grief, he threw himself on the grave, and gave vent to his pent-up agony, oblivious to all else. At length, exhausted by its violence, he turned on his back and lay silent and motionless, gazing upwards into the far beyond, now being lit up by the slowly rising moon. Soon there floated through his mind thoughts of wondrous things concerning that region above, of which his young friend had told him, and whither he said he was going, and there came a subdued influence, and a sense of submission, and an unconscious clasping of hands, as he tried to repeat words that Willie had taught him, and then, addressing the latter, asked that he would tell Him that he used to talk of to take him where he was. Calmed by these cogitations, he opened his eyes, that he had closed during his incongruous petition, and experienced an irrepressible tremor at perceiving a female figure standing over him. His first thought was that his request had been granted, and that a messenger had come for him. A few words, however, in the familiar voice of Milly, recalled him to himself, and with a gasp and a shiver he shook off his perturbation, and sat up, whilst the girl, kneeling by his side, explained how she came to be there. Feigning to be unwell, she had retired early to her room, since the death of the schoolmaster exchanged for a dark closet next to the bread-room,—the other girl, Miss Ann, having been taken to share the bed with the mistress, the latter not caring to be alone. This of

course afforded her the opportunity of quitting the building without being observed, which she did with no other interruption than that occasioned by her entrance into the arched passage under the granary, in which three young porkers, under fattening process, were now housed, and who, with their noses under the straw, had retired for the night. Noiselessly as she entered, her intrusion on their privacy was resented; the three porcines jumped up with a bound and a snort, and crowded each other against the wall. Milly was sufficiently educated in the perverse dispositions of this portion of the establishment, to be aware that any further attempt to advance would call forth a demonstration that might attract observation, and therefore hastily retreated, and crept along the wall until out of view of the kitchen window below, then clambered through a gap into the plantation, whence she reached that part of the river which she had lately forded with Willie. The water had risen and covered the stepping-stones, but, without a moment's hesitation, she drew off her shoes and stockings, and waded to the other side; thence she made her way through the fields and by-ways to the churchyard, and, urged by her tumultuous feelings, was hastening to the grave of Willie, when she became aware of the presence of some other person, and by her movements occasioned so much trepidation to Mape. As she ceased her narration, their thoughts mutually turned towards the occasion of their *rencontre*, and both looked silently at the little mound. Presently Milly looked up at Harfagr, and said, 'Is he here, Mape?—is our little Willie here?' She said this in so plaintive a tone, that the boy filled up, and a choking sensation prevented a reply. She looked stedfastly at him, and then added, with emphasis, 'Mape, he's dead.' The lad was overcome, and threw himself on the mound with a distressing cry. 'Hey, doan't 'ee do that,—you're heavy,' remonstrated Milly.

Mape shrank down by the side of the mound, and gazed at it as though he expected it to heave, then in a husky, broken voice exclaimed, 'Hoa, Mully! 'aht 'll aw de nah, fur poor little Wool?'

'De! doan't tha know sometimes thur wraith comes to a body?'

Mape instinctively drew closer, and replied in a low tone, as he looked stealthily round, 'Doan't 'ee say yon.'

'Mebbe he'd come if we asked him.'

'Drat 't, Mull, aw'll noa stay uv tha doan't hauld 'aht taulk.'

'Why, Mape, wouldn't you like to see him agen?'

'Hi wud aw!—bud he'll nivver coom agen, hissel'. Doan't 'ee mind thame things he towd us?'

Milly pondered a minute, and then said, 'Where's he now, think 'ee?'

'Oop there,' replied the lad, slightly tossing his head upwards, and then looking at the grave as though in doubt.

'No, he ain't; dedn't they put him in here?'

'Ees;—but dedn't he say so.' And then he tried to reconcile the apparent contradiction, until light seemed to dawn on him, and he added, 'Doan't tha see—'aht as thenkt an' taulkt clammered oop there,' again tossing his head upwards. Thereupon both fell into a reverie.

'Mully,' at length said Mape, 'aw'm goan.'

'Going! where to?'

'Aw dunno, but aw'm goan; aw can't bide here noa more; thur's nowt as cares for ma nah, an' aw canna bide. Nobody'll miss ma, an' thur's summut here,' pressing his hand to his breast, ''aht's sinkin' me loike a stoan.'

'You'll starve.'

'Noa, aw woan't; look here;' and he pulled a large hunk of brown bread out of his coat pocket, that bore evidence of having been 'riven' from a loaf.

Milly was satisfied, both evidently being of the idea that the handful, like the widow's cruse of oil, would never fail, and she repeated her question, 'where was he going?'

'Tha woan't blab uv aw tell tha.'

'Me! I'd help 'em all away if I could.'

'Wall, aw'm goan to th' coil toon, an' aw mud be awa' afore aw'm mist.' He rose from the ground, as did the girl, and held out his hand and said, 'Good-bye, lass, aw'll allers mind tha, cos tha luv'd him, though aw daresay tha'lt be glad aw'm goan.' The last part of the sentence was uttered in a tone that rather rendered it doubtful if he meant what he said.

'Glad? of course I will!'—Mape withdrew his proffered hand,—'wouldn't I be glad to see you out o' this, an' mysen too.'

'Aw'm sure tha wud! gie us thi haand, an' uv aw nivver see tha agen'—his voice choked, and, letting go her hand, he wiped his eyes with his cuff. 'Dang it, Woollie, soomtimes aw wush aw'd nivver seen tha. Aw'm fain tha'rt dead an' goan, tha cud na ha' stood 't.'

'You'll not forget me, Mape, and—and'— She took up the

corner of her apron and applied it to her eyes, without finishing her sentence.

'Noa, lass, aw'll nivver forget tha,' said the boy with emphasis; then took her hand again, and grasped it with energy, as he added in softer tone, 'Aw loove tha next to Woollie, an' uv aw get to yon place aboon, where aw wush aw wur nah'— The desolate heart could utter no more, and, giving her hand another squeeze, which she as fervently reciprocated, he strode off towards the gate, not trusting himself to look back. Thence he made his way into the fields, keeping along the inside of the hedge that separated from the road that led to Newcastle, whither, according to custom, he had, in his turn, more than once accompanied the carts for coal. Arrived there, he shipped in a collier sailing to and from London. Except a few inquiries to ascertain that he was not dodging about the neighbourhood, no further effort was made to recover a boy who had ceased to be other than an incubus to the establishment.

As Mape Harfagr's form faded from Milly's strained sight, a breeze sprang up that caused the long rank grasses to bend in wave-like undulations, and now and again, as the motioned air forced itself through the narrow intervals of the crowding gravestones, a moan of lamentation seemed to rise and die upon the stillness, whilst an occasional stronger gust shrilled a cry as of mourning for the dead who lay below, awaiting the dread day of assize. But there stood that strong impassioned girl, coarse in frame and feature, but tender in heart. Her shawl, with which she had covered her head and shoulders on leaving the house, had fallen to her feet, her hair had blown over her face and ears, and her eyes, vainly endeavouring to pierce through the gloom, flashed alternately in defiance or tenderness, as, moved by the powerful workings of her mind, she seemed to enjoy the dreary loneliness of the place. Presently the pale moonlight, that had been obscured by a large heavy cloud, gleamed on the churchyard, and she looked down upon the newly cut turf that covered the little mound at her feet, and a confused notion of the meaning of her conversation with Mape as to Willie's rising ran through her mind, and she muttered,

'Ain't he covered up under those heavy green sods? how can he rise with all that load on him? Willie! Willie!'—she stamped her foot—'I want to see you!—there's no one here but me.' She paused as though awaiting the opening of the grave.

'No, you're not able,—too heavy,—and they're going to put a stone on you, for fear you'd rise, I s'pose,—a big tombstone, so his aunt said. I s'pose she was his aunt,—a brave aunt, to be sure. Was that her Willie loved so? then I'm glad I've got none.' She hesitated as though reconsidering this last thought,—'P'r'aps I have, though, and she'll keep me here too till I die, and then she'll come and put a stone on me for fear I'd rise to trouble her. Poor Willie! I loved you better than that.' She stooped down and threw her arms around the grave, laid her head thereon, and exclaimed, 'Yes, I did, I did!' Then in louder tones, as she raised one of the sods and placed her mouth close to the earth, cried, 'Willie, Willie! He don't hear, he's dead,—*he'll* never rise again.' She kissed the turf, gathered up her shawl, threw it over her head and grasped it tightly round her neck, and without another word or look hurried back to the school.

CHAPTER LXIV.

GRUMPHY WRECKED.

A FEW mornings succeeding the eventful occurrences of the evening of Mr. Figgins' liberation from the Bench, the surgeon was called, by a pressing message from Mrs. Herbert, to attend her eldest daughter, who, as well as herself, had returned to the Square, the former in an alarming state of health. On his return therefrom, he was shut up longer than ordinarily in the surgery, where, amongst the correspondence that awaited his perusal, the contents of one letter appeared to have greatly disconcerted him, for, on issuing from the room, his irritation was displayed in so extra a shape in his conduct to the assistant, as even to provoke from that subservient personage a few indirect retorts. Without, however, heeding his mutterings, the surgeon reached over the counter for the day-book, wrote therein a prescription for Miss Herbert, and went out without deigning any further communication.

Left to himself, after perusing the entry in the book, the assistant slowly withdrew his right hand from a sling suspended to his neck, and examined the plasters thereon. It had been considerably maimed, and was still much swollen. As soon as he had readjusted them, and carefully replaced the wounded member in the folded handkerchief, he struck the counter with his other hand, and exclaimed as he did so,

'Nabbed him so completely, and to lose him through a set of salt junks!' Then, after a pause, 'And that military donkey! —if he had had the pluck of a man, he'd have got him into the boat whilst we were engaged above.' Mr. Grumphy became considerably moved by his reflections, but was speedily recalled therefrom by his knocking his disabled arm against the desk, and, writhing with the pain, he walked about the shop and into the surgery, where his attention was attracted by a letter lying on the table, which he took up and read.

'DEAR CELSUS,—Before I quit these shores, I must again express my disgust at the pusillanimous conduct of that surly bluff of yours.'—[Mr. Grumphy stopped and ground his teeth, and was about to become demonstrative, but a twitch of his arm renewing the pain, his attention was required thereto long enough to permit of his wrath subsiding.]—'Imagine my chagrin, ole fellow: brought up my detachment, posted it admirably, came down on the enemy at the charge, and in the act of carrying him off, bound hand and foot, when that idiot Skewers came up with a force treble ours, and before I could rally my brave fellows, they were in full retreat. Why did not Hawkes present that fool with a latitat. However, as I have already explained all to you, this is merely to remind you that, though deprived of your pupil's company, I'm off in a day or two to gain fresh laurels in the service of a more grateful people; ah, Scarr, wounded honour! Merit has no chance here, so, isle of beauty, fare thee well,—farewell to the land of the brave and the free (Shire Lane, at the sponging-house, to wit, as friend Hawkes would say). Ah, Scarr! one thought oppresses me, the extreme regret my departure will cause to my most attached friends, the tailor and others of that ilk. Fare thee well,—"and if for ever, still for ever fare thee well." Would take a personal leave of you, but fear I might come in contact with one of the friends aforesaid (Hawkes again, learnt a good deal of law lately), and the interview would be too much for me.—Ever of thee—addio.

'HORATIO LEJETTE.

'Aboard the *Don Pedro.*

'*P.S.*—Keep dark as to my whereabouts until after the sailing of the vessel. Send me a little of the needful, I'm hard up; and wind up our affairs as soon as you can!'

'Like to have given you a token of my appreciation of your merits before you left,' thought Mr. Grumphy, as he laid the epistle down on the table and returned to the shop, where he stood at the door, then opened it and looked cautiously up and down the street, after which he took up his hat and hurried across the way into the gin-shop, tossed down a glass of raw brandy, and was back in a jiffy. Mr. Grumphy's spirits were somewhat elated,—indeed, they appeared of late to be oftener so than otherwise,—and he was soon bustling briskly about the shop, at one time blowing the dust off the jars on the counter, or wiping

out the scales with his one hand; then referring to the prescription book, and humming in a sort of chant the names and quantities of the specified ingredients in the several entries. At the conclusion whereof he flapped with his one hand, and then drew his pen across those already made up, as he checked them with the number of packages awaiting the return of the boy to be despatched to their destination. Presently he came to the last entry, headed 'Miss Herbert,' over which he paused, and read it twice before his abstracted thoughts could be brought to a consideration of the items, when he noticed that one of the ingredients was of a very deadly nature. But the whole prescription had been written in so blurred and hurried a manner, that it was not only difficult to make out, but the quantities were scarcely legible, and he concluded, unless the surgeon returned too late, to await a reference to him before 'putting it up,' but in default to use his own discretion as at other times.

Thereupon he went into the passage and hung up his apron, that had fallen on to the floor, and thence sauntered into the surgeon's room, and seated himself at the table. As his eye wandered over it, he was attracted by a piece of black-edged paper, projecting from inside a volume on clinical surgery, probably placed there to mark the place. He opened the book, and found it was a letter, and in a careless way looked over it. Suddenly he recoiled, and exclaimed aloud, 'What!' and in an excited manner ran through the contents; at the conclusion whereof he dashed it on the table, and for a brief space sat as though prostrated: one or two hot scalding tears ran down his red, bloated face, and in a tremulous voice he exclaimed, 'Oh, mercy! dead!' His head fell on the open book, and his frame quivered with emotion, then a cold shiver shook him until his teeth chattered. He raised his head, looked vacantly around, and, rising from his seat, struck the book with his fist, and almost shouted, 'You infernal villain! another victim! another!' He stood and looked down at the letter; then, with an effort to overcome his emotion, he strode about the room, muttering in a sarcastic tone, 'What matters? what matters? what's it to me? It'll soon be my turn. My turn? Yes, I'm going fast—fast'—He stopped short, and in a loud voice exclaimed, 'Where—where to?' and paused; then in a malignant tone, that echoed through the passage, and might have alarmed Mrs. Scarr had she been within, 'To the devil! and the sooner the better; there'll be an end to me—an end of my dog life. What was I

made for?—to be his miserable tool? Curse him, I'd like to send him there first, I would.' Again he paced the room, breathing imprecations against the surgeon, until gradually his violence abated. and there was a reaction; when in a subdued tone, that betrayed how keenly he felt, he muttered, 'And so I'll never see you again, my poor lit—little'— He had very nearly broken down, but, mustering all his strength, he flapped his side, and, resuming his sarcastic tone, added, 'I'm a fool, an idiot! what need I care? what was he to me? there's another out of the way; he'd have made a fool of me if he'd come back. Small chance of that, though I don't know,—the other did. Ay, the other, that other! sink him, what brought *him* back? so gentlemanly, so polite, so superior to any one else.' As he uttered these last words, forgetting himself, he clenched his maimed hand, and cried out with the pain. He drew in his breath and held it for a space, whilst he pressed his arm against his breast to deaden the throbbings; then as soon as able he added with bitterness, 'See to it, young man, if I don't make you smart for this, my name is not—Surly Bluff, if you like.' He seated himself at the table, and took up the letter again, to ascertain the name of the writer, and had just made out Minas Kearas, when he was startled by the voice of the surgeon at the room door, he having entered by the private way.

'Well, Mr. Grumphy, what do you think of it? what do you think of it?'

The assistant rose in confusion, but made no reply.

'What do you think of it, sir, I ask?' repeated the surgeon in an imperious tone.

'Think!' replied the assistant, roused by the tone, and still smarting from the pain, increased by the sudden jerk occasioned by the surgeon's abrupt appearance; 'I wish it had been someone else.'

The surgeon opened his eyes and scrutinized him, as though endeavouring to probe his meaning, whether personal; but from his action with his pained limb concluded it *was* intended for some one else, and responded with emphasis, 'I wish it had;' then in a more thoughtful manner, appeased by Mr. Grumphy's presumed identity of views, added, 'It's a pity that little one's gone, though.'

'Eh!' responded Mr. Grumphy, surprised into an expression of sorrow at what he mistook for an exhibition of regret; 'poor little fellow!'

'Very unfortunate,' continued the surgeon, 'that he should have died.'

'Wasn't it?' resumed the assistant, encouraged to further expressions of sympathy by this unprecedented display of interest; 'poor little fellow! no wonder you liked him.'

'Liked who?' said the surgeon, opening his eyes to the full.

'Little Willie.'

'Liked him! Oh, ah,—yes,—I would have liked him to have lived till I'd done with him. He's gone too soon,—at a most inopportune time; just now he could be ill spared. I've lost in him an important leverage. Just now, Mr. Grumphy, with one thing and another, things are looking black; it will require some wisdom to regain our lost ground.' These remarks served to call both to their own reflections, and in a few minutes the surgeon retired up-stairs, and soon after was heard to slam the side door as he once more left the house.

Left to himself the remainder of the day, Mr. Grumphy was continually bobbing in and out, and visiting the tavern, no doubt additionally incited thereto by the depressing influence that the intelligence of Willie's death had occasioned; although, if not to the same extent as on this day, it had, as intimated, for some time been his daily and nightly practice to so indulge, as to be continually more or less under the influence of alcoholic drink. Towards evening, however, the excited buoyancy of spirit, thus artificially maintained, had subsided into a dull heavy state, during which he undertook and contrived to put up the medicine for Miss Herbert, after which he again resorted to the gin-shop, and on his return began to exhibit some very marked aberrations of intellect. Seated behind the counter, he fixed his gaze on the gallipots arranged along the top shelves, which, as before intimated, had been there so long that no one could tell who placed them there. Tired of inspecting these, his eyes descended to the lower rows of glass-stoppered bottles, partially filled with coloured liquids, and having abbreviated Latin labels thereon, further abbreviated by constant handling. For these latter he seemed to have a greater respect, as he soon began a series of slow bows, first to those directly opposite, and then at the further end. But as this recognition did not produce any effect on the shabby bottles, it may be that it was the cause of his finally making a more demonstrative effort to attract their attention, by bringing his head into such collision with the edge of the glass case on the counter, as to produce a very red mark on his

forehead, and an ugly growl through his clenched teeth; and further caused a rebound that sent the stool on its two hind legs, only stayed from gaining a horizontal position by Mr. Grumphy's occiput coming in contact with the shelving in his rear, which counter-blow appeared to settle the disturbance occasioned by the frontal one, since he quietly reposed there. His eyes, however, were still fixed on the opposite side, but the angle of vision once more inclined to the gallipots, whence, probably from three or four being labelled conserve of roses, indicative of their former contents, there slowly rose from the largest one a diminutive elf of roseate hue, with rosebud hat and rosebud shoe, and other rose-leaf and flower garniture, emitting a fragrant aroma as of rosewater, that dripped from its translucent robe. A slight movement in Mr. Grumphy's orbs caused the pigmy sprite to pop on to the rim of the next gallipot, and caper around it, until another movement of said eyes perched him on the mouth of a large square bottle, where he remained poised a short time, when, startled by the sounds that commenced issuing from Mr. Grumphy's nasal tunnels, he disappeared down the neck thereof. The spasmodic efforts that ensued to keep up the supply of pure oxygen requisite to continue the emission of the Æolian notes, appeared at times likely to issue rather in the suspension, not alone of the melody, but of any further ability to produce any sound whatever, the struggle to perform which caused him temporarily to awake, and, resuming a more upright position, to cast his eye on the floor, and, had he been sufficiently conscious, he might have seen the fragments of a bottle that his head had knocked off the shelf, and which, as it contained otto of roses, additionally aided the foregoing illusion by its pungent odour. But, oblivious to this and all else around, he laid his head on his arm as it rested on the counter, and was soon taking a new departure in the *rôle* of entertainment, as his chuckles and ejaculations testified. This time a bright, laughing, blue-eyed boy was climbing up his back, shouting into his ears, and hugging him with such vehemence, that a gurgling in the throat attested he was in danger of strangling. A slight alteration in his position relieved this; and anon the boy was in his arms, a deadly pallor in his face, the blue eyes dim and glazed, and his body cold, so cold that he pressed him close to his breast that he might impart some of his own too intense heat to his stiffening frame. Tight, tighter, still tighter; and then, as he withdrew him from his bosom to witness the effect, he had squeezed the

life out. A hiccup and a sob, a hiccup and another sob, a nascent tear that dried up ere it ran down his burning cheek, a stifled moan, two or three convulsive twitches, and a shout,

'That's him!—hold him—strike him down! The rope—the rope! arms, feet! The gag—quick, the gag!' The swelled veins in his neck, the vibrating muscles of his arms, and the contortions of his face told of the visionary struggle, the hard fight, enacting in imagination, at the head of the lane in Wapping. 'In with him! Oh, that slash!' He started up as he uttered these last words, and jumped off the stool, and held up his sore hand, that during these distressing ravings had been exerted to action, and was now torturingly paining. He reeled about, with difficulty replacing the inflamed limb in the sling. Then his eyes rolled wildly around until they fell on the pestle, which he seized with his well hand, and staggered round to a large crock, standing at the end of the counter on the other side, and, charging the griffin-shaped handle with mocking him, with one blow demolished it.

The fact is, Mr. Grumphy was in a state of inebriety verging on delirium, and was just then a fitter subject for a strait jacket than to be loose in a drug shop. More than one person who had entered to procure some unctuous preparation or other pharmaceutic compound, hurried out again with alarm; and twice did the boy, who had returned, essay to place the articles on the counter in his basket, but on each attempt was compelled to retreat, scared by Mr. Grumphy's extravagant antics. At one time he directed the boy's attention to the broken crock, and demanded if he did not see the snakes curling around it; now they were crawling along the floor, followed by his eyes, that seemed to protrude from their sockets, until, put to flight by their near approach, he retreated to the passage; whilst the lad let the basket drop, and stood rivetted to the spot, in the expectation of seeing the vipers winding up his legs. 'Off, off!' cried the demented man, as he shook his hand violently and rushed back to the shop, whereat the boy uttered a shriek and fled into the street, which for a moment appeared to stay the violent action of the assistant's brain.

In a quieter mood he slowly inspected the shop, muttered a few words, and then deliberately, with one swoop, swept the opposite counter of everything on the lower half thereof, climbed on the cleared space, and stretched himself at full length thereon, and in a sepulchral voice proclaimed he was dead, thereupon

imitating the tolling of a bell. Then the idea occurred to him that it would be necessary to inform the surgeon of the circumstance, and forthwith he rose, went round to his desk, and addressed a note to that individual, stating that he had died that afternoon, and requested to be buried by the side of Willie, lest the 'old boy' should snatch him. As soon as he had deposited the epistle on the surgeon's table, he returned to the counter to see if his body was properly laid out, but was amazed at finding it was not there. He looked up, and down, and around, and again at the counter on which he had lain. 'Gone!' He hesitated, rubbed his burning brow, and then, as though he had solved the enigma, exclaimed, 'The villain—the young villain! Stole it—gone to sell it! I'll spoil your fun!' and with that he went quickly out on to the street and looked about.

It so happened that the boy was leaning against a window a few doors off, whence he could watch the entrance to the shop, and as his eye fell on the emerging form of the assistant, he took to his heels and ran as fast as his legs would carry him. Instantly the other gave chase.

'Go it, young un!' shouted the old woman at the apple-stall. 'Cut away!' cried the waterman at the hackney-coach stand. 'Quick, quick!' screamed a couple of ragged urchins, bolting out of a court, and overtaking him, as they urged his speedier flight. 'What did ye grab? gie it us, we'll take care of the swag.' And soon a score of others became interested in the chase, each vociferating and advising as to his best course to escape his pursuer; but as the boy was in the neighbourhood of Bow Street, it was not at all surprising that he ran full tilt into the arms of a very stout gentleman, with a very red waistcoat, at sight of whom the major portion of the interested crowd immediately disappeared.

'Search him, search him!' exclaimed Mr. Grumphy, as he came panting up; 'he's got me in his pocket.'

Unable to make out the rights of the case, the officer proposed to convey the boy to the police office; but, at Mr. Grumphy's urgent request, whose eccentric conduct soon enlightened him on the real state of matters, he brought the terrified lad, loudly protesting against such a course, back to the surgery, where, after giving him a caution as to his future behaviour, he left him, and dispersed the anxious crowd around the door, who were relating to each new arrival thereat, the terrible accident that had happened to a boy, who had just been carried in to the surgeon's

to have his leg amputated, the full particulars whereof a penny-a-liner hastily jotted down, and hurried off to be in time for its appearance in that evening's newspaper.

The run and the breezy air had partially restored the assistant, and after a while he had so calmed down as to become again rational; whereupon, from the confusion of his thoughts, that ran in every direction, unable to recall the particulars that had led to his strange pursuit of the boy, after availing himself of his aid in putting things to rights in the shop, he despatched him with the draughts, pills, and other medicines to the patients for whom they were intended, amongst the rest the one for Miss Herbert. The boy had not been long gone before Mr. Grumphy experienced an excessive trembling from head to foot, the result of his late cerebral excitement. As this wore off, it was succeeded by a hypnotic condition, that terminated in his falling into a heavy sleep in the surgery, to which he had retired. Poor victim of a disease,—brought on by his own fault, doubtless, but not less a disease,—the producing cause fearful in its potency and its fascination, both over body and mind, and possessing a strong, if not natural affinity to a phlegmatic habit, in accord with its pathological condition. Arrived at such a state, should its subjects be treated as criminals? Treated they should be,—compulsorily, too, if need be, but in hospitals or inebriate asylums,—surely not in houses of correction or penitentiaries. As well commit the poor lunatic to the treadmill, as a punishment for his loss of reason, as send the helpless chronic alcoholist to the prison. The State that sanctions and profits by the trade of the drunkard-maker, should at least see to it that its victims be secured from such a penalty, and aid in the effort at restoration, rather than the destruction of the poor, miserable inebriate.

CHAPTER LXV.

'RING THE BELL SOFTLY, THERE'S CRAPE ON THE DOOR.'

THERE was a piece of thick cloth wound round the lion-headed knocker of the door in Bedford Square, notwithstanding which the domestics were continually admonishing the baker or butcher boy, and other such indispensable callers, who never made use of the knocker, not to pull the bell so violently, demanding if they did not see the cloth on the door, which they invariably protested they did not,—not at all improbable, as the bell-pull to which such were privileged was at the area gate, which they were additionally cautioned not to swing so hard on their departure. Arrived in the kitchen, they were further informed that the young missus was very ill, and, it was feared, would never be better, at which sorrowful announcement the purveyors' assistants assumed a grave deportment; but when the cook sighed and raised the corner of her apron to her eye, the proceeding sent such a pang to the bosom of the sympathetic butcher boy, that, lest he should be betrayed into a like proceeding, he caught up his wooden tray and crept out on tip-toe, and walked up the stone steps quite softly for a butcher boy, and even closed the gate with only a slight jar, and did not whistle until he got two doors off, when he commenced a dreary tune, probably intended for the Dead March, with variations from Jim Crow.

Within a week of Miss Herbert's return to the Square after her sudden departure therefrom, and on which, as she entered the house, the inmates could not but be struck with the great alteration in her physical condition, she was confined to her bed, too ill to leave it. Alarmed at her symptoms, Harriet no longer yielded to her importunity, but at once recalled her mamma, and at the same time took upon herself the responsibility to intimate to Aubrey Grey the critical condition in which she

believed her sister to be. On Mrs. Herbert's arrival, she instantly called in the surgeon, which Bertha had strictly forbidden her sister to do, as she insisted he could be of no service to her. The mysterious reticence of Dr. Scarr, according to the orthodox custom of his profession on such occasions, with a few shrugs and solemn shakes of the head in response to the anxious inquiries of Mrs. Herbert and her younger daughter, confirmed those ladies in their opinion that Bertha's state was one of danger.

Miss Austen had been engaged to attend Miss Herbert at the latter's own request. Her thoughtful manner, as well as attention to the wants of the patient, as she moved noiselessly around the room, evidenced her familiarity with the sick chamber; but there was that in the present invalid that at once awoke a more loving interest in the bosom of her amiable attendant.

Seated by the side of her pillow, after the withdrawal of the surgeon, she had during the last half-hour been engaged in reading a chapter from a small pocket Bible, occasionally rising to look at the features of her charge, who, after a night of restlessness, had fallen into a heavy slumber. She had not quite concluded the portion of Scripture that had engaged her attention, when Miss Herbert unclosed her eyes, and, in response to Miss Austen's inquiries, with a faint smile said she felt easier; but not caring for any of the various articles on the table to tempt her taste, she was allowed to lie quietly without further interruption. Presently, as she raised her eyes, they fell upon a painting that hung on the opposite wall, over the fireplace. It was the full-length portrait of a tall, good-looking, portly gentleman, with powdered hair, habited in a blue coat and drab knee-breeches, with white stockings and bright-buckled shoes. He was looking down upon a little girl of about eight years old, who stood by his side. Her plump, dimpled cheeks wore a soft rose-tint that relieved the whiteness of the complexion, as also of the bare, gracefully-rounded shoulders and bosom; a broad-brimmed straw hat, fallen from her head, was hanging behind her back, retained by a blue ribbon, tied under her chin in a large double bow, thereby permitting the light, almost flaxen hair to hang in wavy abundance around her shoulders. One hand held up a corner of her muslin frock, whence peeped out some wild-flowers that she had gathered; whilst with the other she proffered a bunch of violets for the gentleman's acceptance, her sparkling blue eyes adding weight to the request of her expressive lips,

which, as they parted, exhibited two pearly rows of teeth; her symmetrical legs and ankles were terminated by a pair of little feet encased in red morocco shoes, tipped at the toes with black leather.

They were the portraits of Miss Herbert and her father, taken ere yet she knew that there was any other path through life than that of flowers, and at a season when, in unison with her opening life, nature budded and bloomed. But why did she start as she gazed thereon? Was it the involuntary action of her fevered brain? That picture had been hung around the house for many years, until finally it had been transferred to her own room. Still the portrait rivetted her attention, as though she had never before discovered what she now traced in it, and she involuntarily exclaimed, 'How like him!'

Attracted by the remark, Miss Austen followed the direction of her eyes, and then observed in a low tone, 'You were fond of him, Miss Herbert?' But it did not seem to disturb her, or to call her thoughts away from the object of her contemplation, and she continued to repeat the words, 'How like him!' finally adding, 'Darling child!' Miss Austen rose, and looked at the invalid and then at the portraits, and as her gaze returned to the former, Bertha looked into her face, and said, with a slight emphasis, 'Isn't it like him?' and then tears trickled down her hectic cheeks, which, as her nurse wiped off, it drew her attention from the painting, and with a perceptible embarrassment she asked, 'Did I talk in my sleep?' But before Miss Austen could reply, she continued, somewhat flightily, 'I was at heaven's gate, and I looked in, and looked around, and I saw such a beautiful bevy of angels, little angels. No, they were not angels,'—she raised her hand, and drew it over her forehead,—'they were not angels; but they were so beautiful. Their faces shone like diamonds on which the rays of the sun had fallen, their forms so white, so pure, so lovely; and as I looked, one more beautiful than the rest came to the gate, and—and he was like'—

'Jesus,' interposed Miss Austen, presuming that was who she intended.

'Like who? O no! not like Him. Like him there,' and she pointed to the portrait, 'only far more beautiful.'

'Like your papa? How delightful!'

'O no! not him, the other one—the other one—him.' She turned her face towards Miss Austen, and with a mournful look gazed at her an instant, and then added, 'My head's

confused,' and tossed her hand on to the pillow, and closed her eyes.

Miss Austen wet her parched lips, and applied a cloth, dipped in a cooling lotion, to her temples. Again she turned her head, with her face towards the window, and exclaimed, with a deep sigh, 'Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest! I'm not fit to live.'

'Then, dear lady, are you fit to die? and in that case, *would* you be at rest?' said Miss Austen, as she leaned over the sufferer.

'I know, I know all you have told me; but did not the minister tell me on his visit yesterday that if I repented it would be all well?—that God is merciful.'

'He is; and His mercy is seen in giving His only Son to die for us. But we must not be misled by sympathizing friends; out of Christ, God is a consuming fire.'

The patient shuddered. 'Oh, Miss Austen, it's cruel to talk in that way at a time when I need consolation and peace. Our minister did not talk so harshly.'

'And must we say peace when God has not said it? Vain, delusive language, when not spoken by the Holy Spirit! and terrible the responsibility of the deluder! Woe to him who "daubs with untempered mortar!"'

The sick one turned her head away with evident displeasure, and closed her eyes; whilst the godly woman noiselessly knelt by the bedside, and pleaded that her heavenly Father would continue those operations of His Holy Spirit that, she felt assured, He had commenced, and work mightily in that poor distracted heart, already deeply wounded, but only so that it might be healed. And she was heard.

Unable to endure the agony of her soul, Bertha turned again to her nurse, and exclaimed with bitterness, 'Oh, what shall I do? He said if I repented. How am I to repent? Of all—of every sin? each by each, and one by one? Tell me; tell me.'

Miss Austen rose from her knees; and as Bertha's piercing eyes fell upon her tearful but serene countenance, she reached forth her hand and grasped hers, and drew her down to her pillow, as she exclaimed, 'Why do you cry? Oh, I am drinking of the wormwood and the gall! I can't repent; and I'm lost, lost!' Rising in her bed, she sat up and clasped her hands; but as her eyes fell once more on the picture, she sank back on the pillow, reiterating the cry, 'Oh, I am lost, lost!'

Miss Austen waited until her excited patient became calmer,

and then, holding her hand in hers, as she gently pressed it, said, 'The bitterness of repentance is past, and were you to renew it, and continue it for ever, it would avail you nothing. You say you are lost'—

'Oh, stop! stop!' exclaimed Bertha, grasping her hand tightly. 'Don't say that! don't say that! And yet,' as she let go her hold, she added, 'it's true. Leave me to perish; I deserve it. *You* cannot save me.'

'No; "none can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Did it depend on mortal, you were lost indeed.'

'Lost indeed,' repeated the desponding girl, 'lost, utterly lost!'

'Listen, dear lady, whilst I read from God's own Word.' She took up the book from the chair, and opened it in St. Luke's Gospel, and read, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

She paused. The sick one appeared struck with the words; and as she pondered them, her nurse put up a silent prayer that they might be savingly applied to the despairing heart.

'Will you read that passage again?'

She complied; and then the invalid repeated them to herself, and at the conclusion looked at her instructor, and asked, 'How does He do that? and how do I know it applies to me?'

'Do you believe those words?'

'I ought to, since they are in that Book.'

Miss Austen turned over to another passage. '"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."'

'Should not perish,' repeated the patient; 'should not perish.'

'Even so; but it is to the word "whosoever" I would more especially ask your attention,—"*whosoever* believeth on Him." You believe on Him, do you not?'

'But I have been so wicked.'

'"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."'

'Whosoever,' again repeated the invalid. 'Would it were I!'

'And is it not? Is it not a term of universal application? And again He says, "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Come, then, to the sinner's dearest Friend: He invites you. "He tasted death for every man."'

'Alas, dear Miss Austen, I am so sad, so weary. If you only knew all.'

'"Come unto Me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest," is His language to you. Oh, dear Miss Bertha, can you hesitate, —can you refuse to confide in One by whose stripes you are healed,—who loved you to the death,—died, that you might not die,—endured for you the Father's wrath,—whose crowning joy, your everlasting salvation and happiness, caused Him to endure the cross and despise the shame, and which salvation He can now ensure, if you render Him your heart? But no, whilst that dear, loving heart asks your faith, your trust, you turn away,—you will not come unto Him that you may have life,—there is no beauty in Him, that you should desire Him.'

'Oh, don't say that!—I *will* come;—He *is* beautiful, altogether lovely. Where shall I find Him?' exclaimed Bertha, strongly moved by such a representation of divine love, and such an imputation of ingratitude.

'Here,—in this room,—on this bed at this moment. You have not to ascend up into heaven, or descend into the depths to seek Him, for He is nigh you,—at your heart. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open I will come in."'

'Oh, open for me!—*I* can't, it is impossible.'

'"Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth."'

'Believe what?'

'That He died for you; that He took your place that you might never die; that He bought you with His own precious blood. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and you shall be saved.'

'Lord,' responded the anxious but exhausted invalid, 'I believe, help Thou my unbelief.' Overcome by the energy of her emotions, she ceased, and as her nurse deemed it prudent not further to disturb her, she soon fell into an untroubled sleep. Whereupon Miss Austen once more bowed by her bedside, and in strong, passionate pleadings invoked the Spirit's sealing to those last words.

As she rose from her knees, Mrs. Herbert and Harriet entered the room, and drew the curtain gently aside to look at the patient, who, they could not help observing, though much flushed, had not that troubled, distressed expression she had worn, asleep or awake, during this last sickness; her placid look gave assurance that she was resting more composedly. As they proposed to remain in the room, Miss Austen took the opportunity to retire to one of the other apartments, to obtain a short

repose, and was soon in that sweet sleep that the Lord giveth His beloved.

Half-an-hour had scarcely elapsed, when Mary Jones bounced into the room, and in an abrupt manner woke her, stating that Miss Herbert was awake and asking for her, and that Mrs. Herbert was afraid she was wrong in her head. Forthwith she hurried into the sick chamber, where she found Mrs. Herbert standing at the foot of the bed in tears, whilst Harriet, with unaffected surprise, was standing at the head, listening to her sister, who was sitting up addressing her.

As Miss Austen took her place by the younger sister's side, Bertha extended her hand, and, drawing her close to herself, exclaimed, as she kissed her, her eyes beaming with joy, 'Oh, dear Miss Austen, I am so happy!'

The good old lady seemed overpowered; tears of joy coursed each other down her cheeks, and she raised her heart to Heaven, and whispered, '"The love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you."'

'Have I slept long, mamma?—I've been with Jesus, and those beautiful words came to me as I bowed before Him, and said, "In my hands no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." And oh! what joy, what love, what peace, came mingled down upon my poor wicked heart!'

'Wicked!' interrupted the distressed parent. 'Don't talk in that way, child. What did you ever do that was so wicked?'

'Hush, ma, hush! Don't speak in that way.' Then she turned to her sister and nurse, and in glowing tones continued, 'He was so beautiful, so lovely, I could have gazed on Him for ever.'

'Altogether lovely,' exclaimed the delighted Miss Austen.

'Altogether lovely,' responded Bertha, 'and I am going to be with Him; for as I looked, I thought I heard a voice say, "To-day"—yes!—"to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Let me see,—those were the words'—She pressed her hand to her forehead as though to assist her memory.

'That the Lord addressed to the thief on the cross,' observed Miss Austen.

'O yes, I remember!'

'And He also prayed, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am;"' added Miss Austen, 'and though it may not be this day, yet, as our time is but as a day'—

'O yes! to-day, to-day!' interrupted the other, with the impassioned utterance of a new-born soul just stepped into marvellous light; 'whilst it is yet to-day, ere the night cometh, and so shall I be for ever with the Lord. Come, Lord Jesus, and come quickly.' Saying which, she clasped her hands and lay back on her pillow, where she soon fell once more into a peaceful slumber, watched in turn by her anxious friends.

Reader, whilst she sleeps, let us consider. Marvel not at this sudden change: the sin-stricken soul had done all that was required, and had received the promise of the Father, and so must we, would we be with Him. Be not misled,—there is no side door to heaven,—no entrance reserved for special guests, as to an earthly sovereign's presence. *He* is no respecter of persons! 'I am the way,' said the Saviour: 'no man cometh to the Father, but by Me.' You must—not may—be born again. It should not be on a dying bed, where few are ever saved; but wherever it may be, it must be. Hear Him: 'Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again;'—you must, or 'Where He is you never can come.'

As the day wore on, whilst awake, she still, though with less energy, but not less zeal, conversed of her altered state,—altered, indeed, for 'all things had become new.' The fear of death was taken away. Her great regret, like that of many others, was at her 'late return,' and she exhorted those around her not to defer, as she had done. But by and by, as she recalled the past, the thought, never until this event absent, came back with overpowering strength. Oh, this woman's love, this first concentration of the virgin affections on its Elysian ideal, can it destroy itself, consumed by its own intensity? It is too ethereal. Trample and crush it as you may, smother it up, open the flood-gates thereon; many waters cannot quench love. It will float above an ocean, —it will live beneath its dark, unfathomed waters; repelled, it rolls back only to return with cumulative strength, and surging, o'erleaps the highest barrier. The desperation of jealousy, or the bitterness of revenge for betrayal, may demoralize or change this instinct of our diviner nature, but this only the more conspicuously reveals its potency, since its realization either embitters the after existence, or transmutes an angel to a fiend. Happily for Bertha, an object, infinitely more worthy of her heart's affections, had interposed to save her from either; how-

ever, before this had been reached, the worm at the gourd had killed the human. But though she was a 'new creature,' subordinately her first love lay enshrined in her heart, nor could she put away the thoughts that now crowded on her.

'We have not many fathers in Christ,' said the apostle of the Gentiles; and how close the relationship becomes to the human instrument of the soul's conversion, only that soul knows that has been persistently followed, until eventually, by that instrument, it has been led to the Cross. Such was Miss Herbert's regard to Miss Austen, whose conversation on the deep things of God, so richly stored in her heart, was listened to with a zest that charmed that meek saint.

Mrs. Herbert and her daughter had retired, and Miss Austen had leaned over her charge to moisten her lips, when she looked into her face and said, 'Dear Aunt Fanny, I shall die and not live.'

'"Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die,"' replied Miss Austen, quoting the Saviour's words.

'Beautiful words,' replied Bertha. 'But there is one thing that is beginning to trouble me and disturb my peace, and I would fain unburden myself to you as to one in whom I can not only confide, but to whom I feel my soul clings as to my dearest earthly friend. What I would say I know is too late to be of any earthly avail, and yet I cannot die without disclosing it to one who, knowing all, should necessity ever require, will then be prepared to vindicate my memory, but until then would guard a secret whose knowledge might—would occasion pain to those whom it has been my earnest endeavour never to grieve.'

She paused, and appeared to be struggling to master her emotions, but the conflict was powerful, as betrayed by the working of her countenance and heaving of her bosom. Fearing the communication she was about to make would prove too much for her in her present weak state, Miss Austen entreated her to think no more of it just then, but leave further reference thereto until another time.

'Another time,' she replied, 'will be too late.'

'Too late? do you not believe your transgressions are all forgiven?' said Miss Austen, under the impression that her anxiety arose from some mistake in this direction.

'O yes, I know that,—I feel it,—and I have God's word for it. But'—she stopped to think, then continued—'I feel I ought to make you my confidant in a matter which, though now beyond recall, affects not only myself, but others.'

At that moment, to the relief of Miss Austen, who began to fear the consequence of thus overtaxing her strength, the door opened, and Mrs. Herbert entered with the medicine that, though ordered in the morning, had only just been delivered, and as she placed it in Miss Austen's hand, informed her that she saw by the directions that a portion thereof, in a wine-glass of water, was to be taken at once, whereupon it was duly administered.

'How strange Bertha looks, mamma,' said Miss Harriet, as, a short time after, she entered the room, slightly agitated, and after going to the head of the bed to look at her sister, went over to her mother and made the remark in a low tone.

Her mother whispered that she had just taken her medicine, and that she must not disturb her. Whereupon Harriet drew her aside to the window, and in a hurried manner informed her that Mr. Grey had just arrived, having, on receipt of her letter, travelled night and day, and was now in one of the dressing rooms, arranging his toilet before making his appearance, and that she had preceded him to prepare Bertha for the interview. Stepping back again to ascertain if she could introduce the subject, after being specially cautioned by Mrs. Herbert, she leaned over about to kiss her, when she started back with a suppressed cry.

'Oh! mamma, mamma, Bertie's dying! Oh, merciful Heaven! spare my sister! spare, spare my darling sister!' and she sank into the chair by the bedside, overpowered by the shock; whilst, greatly alarmed, Mrs. Herbert and Miss Austen, who were in the act of leaving the room that they might not by their presence be a restraint on the projected interview, ran back, followed by Aubrey Grey, who had heard the shriek. As they reached the bed Bertha had risen to a sitting posture; her face and hands were rapidly discolouring, and the nerves and muscles contracting. She looked wildly around, and her eyes fell on the toilet glass in which her features were reflected; the sight caused an involuntary start and a momentary closing of her lids. As she reopened them, she cast a deep intense look of recognition at Grey, then on Miss Austen, to whom, with an effort to smile, she said, 'This day—in paradise,' fell back, and ceased to breathe. The silver cord was loosed, the pitcher broken at the fountain, the wheel at the cistern, and the spirit returned to God who gave it.

A succession of shrill heart-rending cries, bursts of passionate sobs, a low moaning, mingled with bitter lamentations and upbraiding. Faint, sick,—oh, how sick!—those hearts, and we drop

the curtain for a brief space, unable further to intermeddle with the agonies of that hour.

The cloth on the muffled knocker was replaced by the crape that tells that

> 'Some one has gone from this strange world of ours,
> No more to gather its thorns and its flowers;
> Weary with mingling life's bitter and sweet,
> Weary with parting, and never to meet:
> Some one has gone to the bright golden shore;
> Ring the bell softly, there's crape on the door!'

Two neighbouring medical men were called in *instanter;* they looked at the body, examined the contents of the phial, shook their heads, and despatched a messenger post-haste for Dr. Scarr.

A coroner's inquest assembled, and a verdict returned, 'that the death of the deceased had been accelerated by the administration of improper medicine,' and a warrant was issued for the apprehension of the dispenser thereof.

A terrible sense of desolation and utter depression of soul came over Aubrey Grey. Seated for hours by the body of Bertha, during the interval prior to her burial, at times he would break out into passionate grief, until, exhausted, he would lie down by its side, and utter incoherent words of endearment. At other times he would pace the room, which nothing could induce him to leave, and upbraid himself in vehement language as the cause of her death, and with having treated an angel with the cruelty of a fiend. He would stand and gaze on the icy discoloured features, until his fevered imagination revivified them, and the once lustrous orbs appeared to pierce through the closed lids, and send their fire into his inmost heart; whilst again there fell upon his ears the music of a voice whose intonations had once enkindled such melody in his own.

As the days passed on, goaded by the memory of wrong beyond redemption, he refused all consolation. What to him now was the near realization of that ambition for which he had sacrificed all that was desirable in its possession, and which would have so enhanced its value? There was no refuge in the memory of the past. He was conscious he had played the gifted girl false; and as she rose to his vision, the beautiful, the lovely being, in whose companionship his entranced soul had in earlier days exulted, there came also the scathing conviction,

that in the later years he had been prodigal of her affections and indifferent to her worth, and in the exaggeration of his intensified remorse there was the commingling of passionate adoration with torturing self-accusation.

The only alleviation to his intolerable agony was the determination to make the sole amends now in his power. He would acknowledge their union, boldly avow all, and assiduously devote himself to what, were her disembodied spirit permitted to visit this earth, he knew would be recognised as some atonement for his repudiation (or what ostensibly amounted thereto) of his marital state. With this resolve he tore open a sealed packet found in her scrutoire, addressed to himself, and that had been written on her return from her last journey. It contained one or two trifling articles, and a lock of flaxen hair, that he kissed with visible emotion, and then read the contents of a note, on which the marks of tears showed how much it had cost the writer to pen. It fell from his grasp. Even the small reparation he had just proposed, the note informed him, was now beyond his power. Again he paced the room in anguish of soul, the more acute since every avenue of hope was thus closed against him.

At length the remains were conveyed to their last resting-place, and, as he stood over the lowered coffin, he experienced again all that he had endured the last few days,—the pitiable state of one who had learned, too late, the inestimable value of that which, in possession, was but lightly esteemed. Long after the rest had retired, he remained at that mound of earth, oppressed by a stupor that stagnated all expression of feeling, and that denied relief to his overcharged heart.

The day after, unable to trust himself to an interview with the members of the bereaved family, he addressed a few lines to Mrs. Herbert, and before they had risen was on his return to the Continent, where, at his post of duty, he plunged with greater avidity into his official life, and with a reckless zest into the festivities of the hour, hoping thereby to find a Lethe wherein to drown a reproaching memory.

It was not until a year subsequent to this sad event that the evidence of the union of Aubrey Grey and Miss Herbert was discovered by the family, through some papers found in a secret drawer in the latter's desk; but the discovery was of no further use than to reprove the ambitious mother, whose vanity had exposed her child to an issue that had culminated so unhappily.

By that time all further correspondence with Aubrey Grey had ceased.

Miss Austen sought to console Mrs. Herbert and her daughter, not by the meaningless soporific of the duty of resignation, where such duty is hard to understand, but by the true and only source of comfort under such trial,—the undoubted evidence that the departed gave in her extremity, that she was going to a Home where no tears are shed, and where her redeemed soul would for ever bask in the glow of a Saviour's love. He who had truly loved her had, in that last painful scene of her earthly troubled life, gilded the dark cloud that palled the valley, and thereby caused their tears to flow into the ocean of His love. There are shadows because there are lights.

CHAPTER LXVI.

GRUMPHY FLIES—UNEXPECTED RENCONTRES—GRUMPHY DIES.

ON the night succeeding the ill-starred day when, goaded by the intelligence surreptitiously obtained of Willie's death, Mr. Grumphy had surrendered himself so unresistingly to his incessant thirst for strong drink, and under its distempering influence had compounded the fatal medicine, a figure wrapped in a dark serge cloak, gathered closely around him, and his hat drawn down over his forehead, passed hurriedly along Tooley Street, Southwark. Evidently anxious to avoid notice, he jostled through the crowded thoroughfare, without raising his head to take note of any occasional disturbance or event that attracted others. Once only he stopped under the shelter of a dark passage, apparently to collect his thoughts, and to make sure that he was going in the right direction; but it was only a momentary halt, for, clutching his cloak round his throat, he started off again with renewed speed, quickened as in the distance he hears the faint sound of the nightly toll of the large bell of George the Martyr, relic of curfew days, every clang of which seemed knelling a dirge in his ears.

By and by he came to the junction of the two Horsley-Downs, and, after a slight hesitation, hastened along the upper one, and, rounding the dockhead, commenced working his way towards Redriffe, avoiding, however, the main road, and glided through the narrow streets, by way of short cuts, until finally he emerged on to the Rotherhithe Road, as it is also called. Here he halted, uncertain of his whereabouts, and presently walked a few yards back, then turned and retraced his steps, and continued until he arrived at Cherry Garden Street, which he appeared to recognise, and stepped out towards Hanover Street, on reaching which he crossed the road and descended towards the stairs, bearing the same name, leading to the river, a short distance

farther down than those on the opposite, or Wapping side of the Thames, the scene of the late attack on Frendzburgh. As he stood at the head of the stairs, he looked furtively back and around to ascertain that he had not been followed, and that no other person was within hail except a solitary waterman, dozing in a ferry-boat, an extra pea-jacket thrown over his shoulders to protect him from the cold breeze blowing up the river. Putting his hand to the side of his mouth, he startled that functionary as well as himself by a shout of 'Boat ahoy!' which the stillness of the night rendered more resonant.

'Boat, sir? Here ye are, sir,—this way,' exclaimed the waterman, as he rubbed his eyes and scrambled out of his crazy craft. 'Jump in, sir, and put that jacket under ye; mind how ye come;' and he was just launching his boat into the water, when the stranger stopped him by informing him that he was hailing a boat belonging to a vessel that was lying off somewhere in the vicinity, and that he had expected to have found in waiting for him.

'None been here, sir,—ain't likely, neither. Take ye off for half-a-crown.'

'No, they'll be here directly.'

'A shilling and sixpence then.'

'I don't know where the vessel lies.'

'I'll find her; what's her name? She's off there, sir; you can't see her,—it's too dark,—but I know her lie.'

'No, I must wait; I'm sorry, but it was so understood.'

'Just as you like. Here then, hold on, and I'll give her a hail. Boat—a-h-o-y!' shouted the man in a stentorian voice that put the stranger's preceding effort to shame; 'Boat—a-h-o-y!' The other appeared uneasy, and went closer under the shade of the wall. As there was no reply, the boatman again advised him to get into his wherry, and he'd put him aboard in no time. Just then, however, an 'Ay, ay!' came over the inky waters, followed quickly by the sound of oars thrown into a boat and of men descending from a ship's side, and then came the splash of approaching rowers, and soon the boat pulled into the landing. The stranger was helped therein, and the sailors 'gave way' on their return to their vessel. The man appeared more at ease, as though he felt out of the reach of harm, and thereupon pushed his hat off his brow and revealed the features of Mr. Grumphy. A few strokes of the oars brought them alongside of a Portuguese brig, the deck of

which, assisted by the crew, he had no sooner gained, than the impetuous Captain Lejette was at his side, and before the assistant had time to warn him, had seized him by the dexter hand, and thereby occasioned him an amount of pain that it required the lapse of some minutes before he was in a condition either to accept his apologies therefor, or his congratulations on his arrival; during which latter he commiserated him on the untoward circumstance of his being so early wounded in the service, but which, if it would not entitle him to a medal, he assured him, did to the lasting good opinion he entertained of his unsurpassed gallantry, and his great fitness for the position he was about to occupy; and then went off into a further strain of eulogy on his dexterity in, like himself, out-running the constable, and his pluck in venturing to brave the angry billows of the mighty deep in their perilous voyage to other lands, and his laudable conduct in thus hastening from an ungrateful country, to wear the laurels that were sure to be his in the glorious career of the Grand Legion, in which he himself had accepted the post of major, and in which Mr. Grumphy was to be appointed surgeon-in-chief. To this appointment he considered the assistant the more fully entitled, as he had in the first instance, with a commendable self-abnegation, generously waived all pretensions thereto, by doing all in his power, on *that* eventful evening, to force the appointment on his rival, Mr. Frendzburgh Trelawney, for whom it was originally intended, but whose resistance had demonstrated that he was unworthy both of the honour and the grand future now before his substitute, the cosmopolite Mr. Grumphy. His calling, it was true, did not permit of his carrying his marshal's baton in his knapsack, but then he had, doubtless, in one of his pockets the embryo lancet that was to carve his way to the dignity of General of Hospitals. Perhaps the grandiloquent militaire would have approximated nearer to the realization, had he confined his reference to the General Hospital to the simpler idea of that place, being the ordinary rendezvous of the members of the gallant Legion, and where they finally terminated their 'glorious career,' at least such as escaped starvation or other casualties.

In explanation of the Captain's present position, it should be stated that, after the inglorious retreat of that redoubtable soldier from County Terrace, finding that the inquiries at his lodgings rather increased than otherwise, he had come to the conclusion that it was no longer consistent with the views of one whose

estimation of the value of freedom had been enhanced by his late experiences, to remain in London. The prospect of replenishing his depleted purse from the trust funds was every day becoming too remote to entertain even a distant hope thereof. Besides, from the unexpected course things were taking, it was not improbable his connection therewith might yet lead to further unpleasant complications.

Under such pressure, he had come to the conclusion to join some other rare spirits, who, like himself, were bursting with military ardour, the lean lank forms of those warriors giving assurance that it was quite improbable that they would burst from any other cause, and who, in harmony with such aspirations, had volunteered into a foreign legion, as it was termed,—one of those safety valves that, during a long peace, occasionally and happily opens for the relief of the overcharged animal machines, whose belligerent proclivities might otherwise rise to the explosive point, and thereby result in damage to their less pugnacious neighbours.

In order that his friend, Surgeon Grumphy, should have an early opportunity of becoming duly impressed with the responsible nature of his new appointment, as well as with the importance of his own command, the Captain, or, as he should now be termed, the Major, addressed a raw-boned youth, whom he styled his orderly, and directed him to bid the sergeant-major parade the troops on the forecastle. On learning that his order had been complied with, the Commander-in-chief, preceded by the said orderly carrying a lantern, and accompanied by the surgeon, proceeded to the parade ground, not without incurring the risk of breaking their shins by stumbling over coils of rope, spars, and other marine articles strewed about the deck of the *Don Pedro*.

Arrived at the spot, after two or three flourishes with his sword, the Major, still preceded by the lantern-bearer, began an inspection of his motley rank and file, who were adorned with a goodly display of variously-coloured ribbons, or rather, what answered the purpose, strips of calico. The detachment consisted of a medley of ragged vagrants, cadaverous slip-shods, and bottle-nosed *roués*, but whom, in the course of a very spirited harangue, the commanding officer addressed as heroes, dwelling with peculiar emphasis on their cut-throat appearance, which, he declared, was such as to strike terror into the hearts of every one they might encounter, and concluded by endeavouring to inspire

them with a sanguinary desire to avenge somebody on somebody else, and which seemed to elicit very general approval, judging by the winks and nods that ensued, and thereupon introduced the regimental surgeon.

During these proceedings the vessel had been getting under weigh, and soon dropped down the river with her precious freight, whence she put out to sea.

As Mr. Grumphy's antecedents had in no way prepared his friends, if he had any, for a premeditated expatriation from his country, his precipitate action may very correctly be attributed to an involuntary impulse, and which, we are therefore prepared to learn, was consequent on the information conveyed to him by the surgeon, that the coroner, in conjunction with twelve other gentlemen, had deliberately entered into a plot to deprive him of his liberty, a proceeding by no means novel, it being in accord with a very general rule, at least as propounded by Mr. Froude, who, however, ascribes the sage axiom to Goethe, namely, 'that as soon as a man has done anything remarkable there seems to be a general conspiracy to prevent him doing it again.'

A whole year had elapsed, and no tidings of the *Don Pedro* had reached England, since the memorable night that she sailed with the Wapping quota of the grand army of some continental contestant for a crown. It may, however, in default of such intelligence, be assumed that their disembarkation upon the shores of the ill-starred land destined to be the theatre of their valiant exploits, must have occasioned a terrible consternation, the first very natural impression being that a strange people from some barbaric isle had made a descent on their coasts; the next, that an instalment of needy adventurers or mendicants was being added to their already plethoric list. Be it, however, as it might, no thrilling account, either in the war column or under the head of foreign intelligence, appeared in any of the papers within the above-named period, of dashing assaults, protracted sieges, storming of forts, or taking of impregnable citadels, or even the sacking of undefended villages (though this latter would have been more after the manner of those redoubtable warriors) by the British contingent of the invading army. A whole year had the Thames flowed on, as on the night that the gallant vessel, borne on her muddy bosom, floated down to the Nore, but no *Don Pedro* had been reported at Lloyd's or elsewhere, either as arrived at any port or amongst the list of casualties. But the *Saucy Jack* had, and had been as regular in

her trips between Newcastle and London as wind and weather would permit, and was now running up the river at a spanking rate before a stiff breeze that had sprung up from the time she passed Tilbury Fort in the morning, but near which a wind, dead ahead, had detained her during the greater part of the previous night. On she now careered, faster or slower, just as the rounding of the several points, or stretching across the successive reaches, enabled her to avail herself of the full benefit of a fair wind, until she finally brought up alongside another vessel, moored to one of the wharfs at Shadwell, to which she was made fast.

Without loss of time, a rough-built, rather undersized young man leaped ashore, and reported himself to the consignees at the head of the wharf. As an approaching storm, of which the favourable wind had been the precursor, precluded the hatches being unbattened, or the removal of the tarpaulins, there was nothing further that could be done that evening, beyond coiling ropes, furling sails, and making all taut and snug. At the conclusion whereof the said young man went through a very copious ablution, to cleanse himself from the grime and dirt that his vocation as an *employé* on board the collier always rendered essential prior to his going ashore; after which he substituted a round woollen seaman's cap and a smart pea-jacket for a sou-wester and oil-skin coat, and otherwise 'tighted himself up;' and left the vessel in charge of the other two men and a boy, forming with himself the crew of the *Saucy Jack*. Whilst speeding his way along a road with which he seemed familiar, we will turn aside for a brief space to contemplate another incident, whose painful features will call forth more than a passing sigh, whilst its *denouement* leaves but little more to be narrated of those whose chief interest to us has been derived from their necessary connection with the more prominent characters of this story.

On an old box, turned bottom upwards, sat a round-headed, coarse-haired girl, her chin in her hand, and her elbow resting on her knee. Her bent form and inclined head prevented an examination of her features, but from the breadth of the coarsely-clothed back she appeared to be a rough, strong young woman. She sat so long in this position that she might have been imagined to have been asleep, but that at long intervals she withdrew her hand from its support to her head, and looked vacantly on her bent fingers, and then relapsed into her former position, and resumed the same motionless attitude.

The room in which she was seated was on the ground floor, a back apartment looking on to a bare plot of ground, reeking with the accumulated refuse of the neighbourhood. An old ragged pair of trousers, torn in half, supplied the place of two broken panes of glass, a partial defence against the damp, cold air that was rising from the river, in proximity to which the wretched tenement was situated. A piece of canvas was tacked over the bottom panel of the door, or, more correctly, where the bottom panel had once been, but in all probability was kicked out by some former drunken occupant. A handful or two of coals were emitting a lurid, fitful light in lieu of heat in the chimney space, from which the grate had been torn out and disposed of for old iron, and for which a few bricks and two pieces of iron hoop were substituted. Over the coals a tin saucepan, blackened by the smoke, and containing some liquid, rested on the pieces of hoop. At the opposite side of the room was a small, broken-hinged trunk, containing the few articles of rude wearing apparel belonging to the present tenant of the wretched shelter. In one corner was a heap of bed-clothes, rolled up carefully, and intended for the young woman's use when disposed to lie down, but which were not made use of. A cup and saucer, with one or two other articles of delf, were placed on an improvised shelf, a board hung against the wall by strands of rope-yarn. By the side of the female was a chair, the only one in the room, on the wooden seat of which was a phial bottle and a gallipot, containing some medicinal compound, as also an orange, and a cup with jelly. Towards the head of the room, suspended from the ceiling, was an old, stained, well-worn cot, within which, as occasionally intimated by a quick motion thereof, or by a moan or incoherent muttering issuing therefrom, lay a sick man.

The chilly wind, that during the afternoon had freshened up, as the evening closed in became a gale, driving before it dark clouds that finally overspread the sky, and, commencing with a few heavy drops, it soon poured down in torrents. Now and again a foot passenger, overtaken by the storm, was heard running past the door of the house, or darting for a temporary shelter into the open passage, whence, on a lull, he started off again, leaving the deserted locality undisturbed, except by the howling or eddying gusts of the pelting wind and rain, until, by and by, some roving Jack-tars, alike indifferent to rain or sunshine, would come sailing down the street in jovial trim. One such

seafaring man, though not in merry mood, had hurried a few yards beyond the door, when he suddenly broached to, looked round, and, retracing his steps, entered the doorway, expressing to himself his belief that he was daft at not recognising the house at once. He groped his way to the other end of the dark passage, and, after drawing his hands along the wall in search of the room-door, knocked softly thereat, and slowly opened it. Unable to distinguish any object therein, he stood for a moment, and then said in an undertone, 'Aht there, lass?' It was our friend from the *Saucy Jack.*

The young woman started from her reverie, looked towards the cot, and listened, but as there was nothing beyond the same uneasy restless motion and mutterings that had been more or less continued throughout the day, she was about to go over to the saucepan, that gave signs of boiling over, when the sailor, his vision by this time familiarized with the darkness, made her out, and said in a low tone,

'Milly, lass, aht there? How aht tha? how's t' poor chap? Noa waur, aw hope.' Without evidencing any signs of surprise, Milly, for it was she, turned from the fire, after lifting off the pan, and walked over to the young sailor, quietly pulled him into the room by his proffered hand, and submitted, before she closed the door, to a hearty smack on her cheek from the truthful lips of her old friend Mape.

'He's no better, Mape,—don't eat nothin'. Set thee down.' The collier looked round for a seat, and stepped on his toes to the trunk, upon which he threw his cap, and then turned to the cot and leaned over the invalid to observe his face, but which was not discernible in the darkness. Milly took down a piece of candle from the shelf, and thrust it into the fire, and, after one or two attempts, succeeded in lighting it, then brought it to the bedside, and by the shade of her hand threw the light on the sick man's face. He opened his eyes and stared at Harfagr, who thereupon was about to speak to him, but moved back as the man threw his arms wildly up and exclaimed,

'Off! off! it wasn't me—it wasn't me! She did it—it was her!' and he pointed his finger at Milly, as he rose to a sitting posture, and looked around in an excited manner.

His matted hair and disfigured face, scarred with ugly cuts and bruises, and his inflamed protruding eyes, presented a forbidding appearance, as he still glared at the young woman. Undaunted by his manner, she bent down, and, putting her arm

around his shoulders, tried to pull his feverish head to her breast, but which he resisted, and, with his eyes now fixed on Mape, he whispered, 'Hold him whilst I run,' and before they had time to prevent his intention, he rose to leap out of the cot, which, swayed by the impetus, would have thrown him headlong out, but that Mape caught him in time and pulled him down; which action, however, caused the wretched object to shrink with fright, and, as they drew the clothes over him, to appeal once more to Milly for protection. At a sign from the young woman, Harfagr retired from the cot, after which he became less agitated, and, under Milly's soothing attentions, calmed down into the state he had been in the most of the day. After Mape had heated the plaster of the wall, in accordance with the old schoolboy custom, he stuck the candle against it, and went and stood by the side of Milly, who had resumed her seat.

Despite the disfiguration of that countenance, bearing witness to incessant dissipation and resultant disease, there was yet enough, in the marked lineaments thereof, to enable those who had known him in other days to recognise the unhappy Grumphy as the wreck over whom Milly was now watching, with the kindness and devotion of one who, after years of yearning, had at last found something to care for that appertained to herself, and that had a right to her dormant affections. Grumphy was her brother,—discovered, indeed, under circumstances sad and sufficient to repel any other, but which in her case only seemed to call forth her passionate nature with greater fervour,—and she nursed, and watched, and tended him with untiring patience and devotedness, fearful lest any other should rob her of the undesirable privilege of waiting upon her newly-found brother, a designation that her thick pouting lips were ever repeating with a cadence, the echo of her heart, 'Her brother! her own brother!' Quickened by the glowing thought, she would rise from her seat, go over to the cot, and kiss the bloated features again and again, and, during his few lucid intervals, talk to him of the only subject that now seemed to have any power to gain his attention, on which occasions he never tired of hearing the name of Willie Wilton; his school life, his sayings, doings, and remembrances of himself, were repeated over and over, and appeared to afford to each a melancholy pleasure, both in recalling and listening to, except the recital of his closing scene, which, from the poignant grief it occasioned, she never recurred to after the first time.

In order to understand the present position of the above-named parties, and the way in which they have so strangely turned up, it becomes necessary to take a brief retrospect of the past.

Mape's novitiate in the collier trade, though it had not added any further polish to that imparted by the superior training received at Grumbleby, had nevertheless, by his intercourse with the outside world, put an edge on him, as well as divested him of the crudities of his blunted nature, and even sharpened his wits to an extent beyond what might have been expected in so rough a genius. He had not been long engaged in his hardy calling, before he evidenced so much tact, and such an aptitude in the performance of his duties, that he gained the confidence of his employers, who advanced him to a second position, a sort of sailor supercargo and mate, in which *rôle* he was employed on other of their collier vessels than the *Saucy Jack;* nor was he less a favourite with the rough men amongst whom he toiled, who, whilst they were hard upon any exhibition of soft or modish ways, were never chary in their appreciation of a bold, self-reliant character, which, if united to shrewdness, ordinarily obtained an ascendency. But though changed in this respect, he was still the same strong, warm-hearted lad, as true and as ardent as when he championed his *protegé* at the Hall, and consequently as energetic in serving his other schoolmate Milly, with whom he had again been brought in contact in an unexpected manner.

It will be remembered that Willie's inability to decipher the document which Milly had abstracted from the schoolmaster's desk had sadly disappointed her; but although unable to ascertain the import thereof, she resolved never again to part therewith, convinced that it contained some clue to her own history. Day after day, seated in some out-of-the-way nook, she would draw out the mystic record from her bosom, and pore over its contents. Mechanically her eyes would follow her fingers, as they slowly traced the cabalistic letters, possessed of the hazy idea that in some indefinable way their meaning would at last occur to her. Knowing there was little hope of obtaining any assistance from the boys of the school, however high Mrs. Kearas might rate their erudition, she was fearful to apply to any one else, lest it should occasion the discovery and loss of her invaluable document.

Tortured by this continued suspense, one evening, as she sat

in Willie's old copse, engrossed by the pervading thought, the idea that of late had more than once been entertained came with greater force, and she resolved to 'run;' but the resolution had scarcely been made before it occurred to her as something so exceedingly funny, that she threw herself at full length on the ground and laughed until her sides ached. 'It was so queer,—a girl run!' Another burst, in the midst of which she jumped up, gathered her clothes about her, and, displaying the half of a pair of legs, certainly stout enough to support her on any pedestrian excursion, though equally certain not cut out for a run or race in the more precise import of the term, she set off at full speed down the narrow path through the plantation to the river, her eyes glaring wildly, and her legs stepping out *manfully*, whilst her hair and clothes refused to be impeded by the checks laid on them by the intercepting boughs and brambles. Well was it for the two Grumblebies, at that moment ascending the path, that, under the full impression that Milly was 'possessed,' as she came rushing on, always with accelerated speed, they turned and fled, until, nearly overtaken, they shouted in affright, and separating, dashed into the tangled wood on either side, whence they returned to the school with alarm, to contribute another legend, to be handed down by tradition to future Grumblebies, of wild wood-nymphs haunting the plantation. In the meantime, the unsylphide Milly, unable to stay her speed, flew down the precipitous descent, until, tripped by an obstructing clump, she had well-nigh performed an unintentional somersault, only saved from completing it by the rude interposition of the overhanging bushes growing by the side of said clump, which, however, did not prevent her measuring her length on the ground, though with no other injury than a few bumps and scratches, and the further display of her stout continuations, but which were speedily withdrawn from observation as she scrambled to her feet.

This untoward issue might have discouraged a less ambitious candidate for a 'run.' Not so Milly, who was under the hallucination that she had done well for a commencement, and thenceforth the prevailing idea became the 'running' one, which, the more it was reasoned over, appeared the more feasible, until it even appeared quite proper, notwithstanding she was unable to call to mind any precedent for a girl 'running.' The next thought, which took about the same time to vegetate, was, Where should she run to? Beyond the village, all other parts

to her were 'parts unknown.' But that was it, and this thought suggested the next: no doubt the place to which she should run lay just beyond the boundary thereof, for did not Mape take that course after he left the graveyard, and he was never caught. Nobody, she was sure, could find anybody that once got without that charmed circle.

But without further following the unsophisticated girl in her mode of reasoning, or in her solitary flight, which occurred one evening after a tearful, passionate address to Willie's last resting-place, at which she stopped on her way, or to tell of the disappointment when she found nothing but a wide, untenanted tract beyond the outskirts of the village, suffice it that we record that she fled the hated prison-house of her youth, and that, after some trials and a few privations, patiently endured, arrived at Newcastle, where she eventually fell in with Mape, whose delight at seeing her once more was only equalled by his glee at her running, and thereby diminishing the number of the Grumbleby graduates.

By the aid of the lad's employers, the treasured paper had been found to reveal the fact that she was another of the surgeon's wards, and that Grumphy was her brother; and thereupon a passage in the collier vessel, of which Mape was one of the hands, was readily granted. On her arrival in London, by such help as her old school-friend was able to afford, she had discovered the surgeon's whereabouts. Here, however, she was doomed to bitter disappointment, as that worthy not only disclaimed all knowledge of her, but declined giving any information concerning his former assistant, merely stating that he had left his employ in disgrace, and had never been heard of since. Disheartened and hopeless, on her return from her interview with the pitiless man she turned into the Strand, and had nearly reached Holywell Street, when she caught sight of a form and features that she was certain were not unknown to her, and in less than five minutes Milly and Frendzburgh had mutually come to recognise each other. On hearing her sad tale, and commiserating her forlorn condition, he proceeded with her to Lyon's Inn, where he fortunately found Skeggs at home, and by a relation of her story and present situation interested that individual in his old friend's sister, and he thereupon undertook to temporarily provide for her at Frendzburgh's expense. Accordingly, the next day she was committed to Mrs. Figgins' especial charge.

A week or two subsequent to this event, as Mr. Skeggs walked one evening along Wapping, which, notwithstanding the serious adventure of that dark night, he continued to do, though of course not on the same side, he was attracted by a scuffle not very distant from the identical scene of that encounter. His first impulse was to quicken his pace, but the idea of any one being left to the tender mercies of such renegades as infested that locality compelled him to halt, and, observing one or two others making for the scene of disturbance, he mustered courage and ventured to approach, when to his great astonishment he recognised his old friend Grumphy, despite his haggard and emaciated appearance, in a very intoxicated condition, who was being dragged by a couple of watchmen to the lock-up. Greatly moved, Skeggs stood and looked after his old friend, and though, of course, the remaining part of the evening was employed in a manner calculated to restore him to his wonted pleasantry, he could not drive the distressing scene from his memory, and on his return to his chambers, before retiring to bed, resolved to obtain permission from his employers to be present the next morning at the police office, when the wretched man should be brought before the magistrate. Amongst a crowd of criminals, arraigned on various charges, Mr. Grumphy was placed at the dock, and, accustomed as Skeggs was to trying situations in connection with unfortunate clients, his heart was greatly stirred at the wreck before him.

'Grumphy!' repeated the magistrate, as the officer announced his name, the poor inebriate having spoken in too low a tone to be heard, 'Grumphy!—I've heard that name before.'

'Yes, your worship, an old offender,' said the constable.

'Ah, yes, I remember. Why, it's not long since I committed you to jail,' said the magistrate.

'Please your honour, he ain't done nothin' but drink since he's been out,' continued the constable.

The magistrate looked at the shivering figure before him, as though moved by an emotion of pity, and addressing him said, 'Is that true?'

'Yes, sir,' replied the wretched man, and he gave an involuntary shudder, as, raising his bent head to reply, he caught sight of Mr. Skeggs, who at the moment was regarding him with a look of deep earnestness. The keen eye of the magistrate detected the movement, and it not improbably produced its effect, and inclined him to greater leniency, as he thereby

became aware that there was one present who compassionated the unfortunate man, and was no doubt in some way interested in him.

'It's about a fortnight since you were committed for a week, the officer tells me,' continued the magistrate, as the clerk referred to the entry of the charge and sentence.

'I daresay, sir; for I take no account of time now. It may have been yesterday.'

'Can you pay the fine?'

'No.'

'Then what am I to do with you?'

'You can send me up again, I s'pose, for as long as you like,—for twenty days or a month. It'll soon be over.' And the abject man clutched at the bar of the dock to support his tottering frame.

Skeggs could not stand it, and, stepping forward, with much earnestness requested that the prisoner might be handed over to him, and he would look after him, at the same time informing the court of his connection with the firm of Messrs. Nettle and Barrem, solicitors, and that he had known the unfortunate man in the dock in better circumstances. Perhaps under the impression that Mr. Skeggs attended professionally, as well as influenced by compassion for the wretched man, whose last words, corroborated by his feeble state, testified to the futility of recommitting him, the magistrate, after a suitable admonition as to the consequences of a continuance in his intemperate course, ordered him to be handed over to his friend.

Under the guidance of Grumphy, Mr. Skeggs supported him to the miserable hovel in which he had taken refuge. The tenement had long been abandoned as uninhabitable, and was casually occupied by outcasts, who, like Grumphy, availed themselves of some one of its dilapidated rooms for a temporary shelter.

Milly was immediately made acquainted with the facts of the case, and, being her brother, *she* was insensible to any other consideration than that of her duty in his extremity. On his arrival at the room, he had almost immediately succumbed to the effects of his unremitted debauch, and was prostrated with a disease that determined them for the present to let him remain where he was, in compliance with his own demand.

In the meantime Mape came to their aid, his vessel having returned with another cargo of coal, as above recorded; and

the next day he set about rendering the room more habitable, by the addition of a few articles, also provided at the cost of Frendzburgh, who insisted on being allowed to do this for old acquaintance sake.

Miss Austen, through the latter's mediation, was also communicated with, and hastened with a sorrowful heart to minister to one in whom, despite his brusque and uncouth manners, she could not but feel a keen interest, were it only for his former connection with their mutual charge. Again and again, as in Miss Herbert's and many another case, had she knelt by his cot, and presented her petitions on his behalf to a throne of mercy, and, during his lucid intervals, tenderly besought him to cast his ruined soul upon the ever-compassionate bosom of a loving Saviour. To all such appeals, however, he was insensible. In the midst of the most urgent entreaties, as she bowed her ear to catch the quivering words that struggled through his blue, swollen lips, there was no other response from the poor chronic alcoholist than imploring requests for 'Brandy, brandy! oh for a drop of brandy!' to quench (nay, to feed) the fire that was consuming his vitals and licking up the very tissues.

Once, by an almost superhuman effort, he rose and sat up in his cot. His eyes glared wildly around the room, until they fell on his sister, and with a frenzied look he exclaimed, 'Who's that? Is that her? Did I kill you?—poison you? Oh, pity! pity! I—I didn't mean it.' Milly rose, and was about to approach, but he shrieked, 'Stand back! stand back! Oh, don't torture me!' and he wrung his hands piteously.

At a sign from Miss Austen she retired behind the cot. Seeing she had gone, he became calmer, and inclined his head towards the good woman, and said in a whisper, with an imploring look, 'Brandy, brandy! A little—only one drop! O—h! only a drop!' and sank back exhausted. The delirium —the precursor of death—was upon him.

But why linger over a scene so sorrowful, but so common? He lived a few days longer, to suffer, and harrow by his terrible ravings the hearts of his attendants; and then, without giving any signs of repentance, poor erring Grumphy died, as the fool dieth, as thousands die, without God and without hope,—not the drunkards only, not the debauchees alone, no, nor the careless nor the indifferent, but every one, however fair his or her fame, or superior his attainments or worth, who has not cast away all these as filthy rags whereon to place any reliance, and fled for

refuge to the only hope set before him. Reader, there is no other hope. Filthy are we all, and unless *He* wash us, we have no part with Him. Such were the teachings of Miss Austen. How much more acceptable would her ministrations have been had she accommodated her language to that of many a novelist, as well as moralist, and urged a simulated religion, embodied in a sentimental creed! How tolerant of such utterances is the worldling! Charmed by their speciousness, he applauds their liberal tenor. The carnal mind is not at enmity with the facile process by which the hero of a story condones for his frailties (if nothing worse), that have served to amuse and interest during the progress of the tale. Stepping out of his wooden Yorkshire clogs of improprieties into the patent leather pumps of ecclesiastical formalism, the rotten contents of the human sarcophagus are at the same time concealed, put out of view, by the annealing brilliancy imparted to the sepulchre.

We have wept and laughed in turns, as the author led us on, until, at the conclusion, we acquiesced (virtually, if not expressly) in his dogma of latent goodness in man, that demanded only his process to reveal, and thus dispose of the unpalatable truth of inherent depravity, out of which nothing good could come. Charitable, meek (we need not enumerate all the virtues of the sacred calendar which are employed to trick up the especial exponents of these views), they are presented in such attractive garb that we fail to recognise as caricatures the exaggerations, the false men and women, and even children, to whom we are called to do homage.

But why so prone to such delusions? to thus cheat ourselves, or allow others to cheat us, by taking our religious ethics from human source? Because we naturally hate the religion of the Bible, whose whole spirit is a protest against such teachings. There is but one road to bliss, and it passes through no Elysium, —it ends where that begins; but one mode of renovating these fallen natures, and the man who undertakes to teach any other is himself deluded, adrift, the sport of his own unsanctified imaginings.

But Aunt Fanny must stop, lest it be concluded that these strictures have been inadvertently appended to this chapter, instead of being separately issued as a tract, to be distributed by that worthy woman on her visitations to the sick or the profligate.

CHAPTER LXVII.

MULTUM IN PARVO.

FOUR years have elapsed since the shadow of the valley first passed over Grumbleby, and thence sped on, until man, woman, and child had been gathered into the domain of death.

Over their earthly depositories, in ever changeful succession, the sun had shone, the storm had howled, the winter snow fallen, and the tall, rank grasses grown and withered; and now once again the autumnal sky glows in the rich tinsel of the setting sun, here and there studded by a fleecy cloud with golden fringe, whilst lower down, resting on the western horizon, lie light streaks of blended gold and grey.

Two figures, in silent and tearful attitude, are kneeling by the side of that little grave in Bowes churchyard, much changed in appearance, as well as experience, since that sorrowful night when they parted, as then probable, never to meet again. Not, however, changed in the fervour of their affection, or the strength of its manifestation for that well-loved boy, whose image was too indelibly stamped on their simple hearts ever to be erased.

'Milly,' at length said Mape, as he raised his head and regarded her with a mingled look of sorrow and pleasure, 'aw've done as weel as aw could for that poar little chap. Dost like it, lass?'

Milly wiped her eyes, and, returning his kindly look, signified her approval, and they both rose to examine more minutely the neat headstone, placed to mark the spot where one they loved so well was buried, and the expense whereof was defrayed by Mape. He read to her the few words inscribed thereon, that told the name and date of death. It was all he knew of his earliest friend, and, as he looked again at the mound, he apostrophized it in a subdued voice.

'Aw'll ne'er forget thee, poar little Will, cum what will.

'T wur you as towt me the best 'at ivver aw learned. An' uv ivver we've a boy, Milly, we mun ca' him Willie.' Milly dropped her lids and blushed assent.—'Poar wronged lad,' continued he, 'aw wonner whose boy tha wert. Rot it, Milly, uv ivver a lad of ourn 'll want a feyther or mither, eh, lass?' and, taking her by the arm, he drew her to his side, and was about to seal the avowal on her lips, but that Milly drew back in time to express her doubt of the propriety of such an act at such a place, which recalled him to a more sober deportment, and he once more silently contemplated the grave and the stone, until, attracted therefrom by the familiar song of a robin perched on the rail surrounding a neighbouring mound, he drew Milly's arm into his, and, after another last look, moved quietly off the ground to a light waggon, the horse whereof was fastened to the gate. As there could be no further impropriety connected with the act, before lifting her into the vehicle he gave her the deferred salute, the more hearty for its postponement, and turned the horse's head towards Newcastle, in which their future home was situated, a neat, small cottage, for they had just been made man and wife, and had taken this jaunt to Bowes for a wedding-tour. It only remains to add of them, that in after years Mape Harfagr became part owner of a collier and of a small family, the eldest boy of whom he called Willie Wilton, often rehearsing to him incidents in the life of the original, in the hope that he might in some measure emulate him.

A year prior to Mape and his wife's espousals, Frendzburgh's affairs were brought to a satisfactory issue, through the able management of Messrs. Nettle and Barrem, and of course by no means ignoring the co-operation of their indefatigable clerk, Octavius Skeggs, whose talents were never before so heartily enlisted in promoting the success of a cause, if we except the Figgins suit, but then that had been so mixed up in the other, that they need scarcely be separated, as regards the incentive to Mr. Skeggs' zeal.

By the settlement, and after a prolonged search both at home and abroad into matters of which Messrs. Scarr and Company were presumably ignorant, Frendzburgh was not only put in possession of his patrimony in England, but it was further augmented by the addition of property abroad, the arrangement of which had been the cause of his father going on the voyage that cost his life, the vessel, as before stated, having never again been heard of.

Convinced that further opposition was useless, and fearful of ulterior evil results to themselves, Mr. Hawkes and clients were too glad to be allowed to escape by a compromise that exacted no scrutiny of the past, and which was effected within a year of the failure to entrap Frendzburgh.

All matters being thus satisfactorily adjusted, Mr. Zenas Hawkes very magnanimously waived his pretensions to the hand of Miss Harriet Herbert, and condescendingly retired in favour of his more favoured rival. Frendzburgh's overtures were no longer discountenanced by Mrs. Herbert, who did not now need a very large amount of penetration to guide her in the preference of the one that would, both by accomplishment and fortune, be the most likely to promote her own aspirations, as well as her now only daughter's happiness, and as a consequence, about the same time as Mr. Harfagr and Miss Grumphy became a unit, Mr. Trelawney had the felicity of entering into the same relationship with Miss Harriet Herbert. Heiress to ample means, their united fortunes rendered it unnecessary for Frendzburgh to practise his profession, and his first care was to compensate his father's old warehouseman for his integrity, and for the suffering incurred through his fidelity to himself. In pursuance whereof, and by the further help of Mr. Skeggs, Mr. Figgins was once more in business, but this time in the more pretentious calling of slop-seller, in which occupation he did a very good business, that enabled him to provide his family with all the comfort of a well-to-do tradesman.

Nor was Mr. Skeggs left in the lurch; for, as early as the multiplicity of affairs, now engaging both his own time and attention and that of the Figgins family, would permit, he also had the inexpressible happiness of leading Miss Arabella Jemima Figgins, a blushing bride, to a small house situated in one of the streets over Waterloo Bridge, where, metamorphosed into Mrs. Skeggs, she managed their domestic affairs as perfectly as ever Mrs. Figgins had done in her own establishment, and which Mr. Skeggs considered no mean compliment. And though you travelled far, you might have travelled farther before you found a happier pair,—the sweetness of temper and sprightliness of manner of Mrs. Skeggs, under the benign influence of her liege lord, rendering their home a little paradise. There was only one drawback,—they were rather stinted in means. Somehow Octavius had not calculated as near as he ought to have done, and it was not long before he discovered that it cost more to

support two in a whole house, than one in chambers. In some measure to meet this, or rather to avoid adding to the embarrassing discovery, he undertook to reach his office by way of Blackfriars Bridge, but gave it up after a week's trial, for sundry reasons. In the first place, it added considerably to the distance and consequent expense in shoe leather, and after his day's work, mostly out of doors, he returned to his home too fatigued to perform certain little requisites about the house that necessitated his special attention; and further, Mr. Skeggs would shilly-shally around Arabella so long in the morning, that at times he would start from home when he ought to have been in Essex Street, thus rendering it altogether a matter for serious consideration. Happily, in his dilemma, and just as he had begun to incur the heavy outlay of twopence a day, by taking the much shorter route over Waterloo Bridge, which might have terminated in serious embarrassment pecuniarily, his employers came to his help, by promoting him to the post of chief common law clerk, *vice* the former occupant of that honourable post, who had left their service. Henceforth Waterloo Bridge was a bagatelle, and Mr. Skeggs experienced no scruple in aiding to make up the company's dividends, varying his journey occasionally by a row over the river in a waterman's boat; on which occasions, at times tempted to show his proficiency in 'pulling' an oar, but not feathering it artistically, he was apt to catch a crab without fishing for it.

As for Messrs. Hawkes and Son,—the latter of whom never proved himself a very valuable adjunct to his parent professionally,—as also the surgeon, they continued to flourish in their respective callings, although removed to different localities. There appeared to be no lack of clients in their enigmatical line of business, the demand for their services being rather on the increase than otherwise. Consequently it is not in our power, in harmony with novelists in general, to lodge them in Bridewell, or string them up at Newgate, but to bow to the dictum of the wiser writer, and admit that they flourished like a green bay tree,—at least in this life.

We grieve to record that Figgins never had an opportunity of recouping Ben's generous advance, that worthy mariner having on his next voyage gone to the 'bottom' in the crazy vessel in which he shipped, the business-like owners being fortunately relieved of her in that very profitable way, there being no officious Plimsoll to interpose any salutary objection to the venture.

Coffined among the myriad remains to be exhumed in some later geological upheaval, when the dawn of a future eos shall startle by the disclosure of astounding fossils, embedded in ancient strata, poor Ben may be exhibited in the national museum of the metropolis of a regenerated African nation; and there, in a glass case, minus a toe, or a leg, or an arm, or both, or all, stand bolt upright, an incontestable witness that he lived some indefinite number of ages prior to Adam, and thereby set at rest the vexed question of pre-Adamite man.

Poor Grumphy's reappearance can only be accounted for on the supposition that his habits totally disqualified him for the honourable appointment intended by his gallant friend the Captain, and that he had, in consequence, been permitted to find his way back as best he could; or that, being too sensible of his own worth to risk his person in any Quixotic or Theomachic expedition, he had taken French leave, and returned, minus the lancet that was to have carved his way to highest medical status.

The formidable Captain, otherwise Major, thus left to pursue his heroic course, may have risen to the position of generalissimo, or have early fallen, gallantly fighting at the head (or tail) of his 'ragged rascals;' but as no account, as before intimated, ever reached his country of any such events, it is reserved for some future historian to discover and record the facts of the case.

Mrs. Herbert resided with her son-in-law, the same roof also affording a home to the devout Miss Austen, whose lovely Christian spirit imparted a zest to their union, and eventually, by her attractive and persuasive walk and conversation, led all three to entertain an infinitely worthier guest. Priceless boons to many a home and to many a society, these dear, saintly old maids. Unlike the daughter of Jephtha, they have no need to bewail their virginity. Vowed to the Lord, for them there is reserved a reward with which husband nor daughter nor son can compare! their Maker is their Husband.

A little subsequent to this period,—only think, or guess,—no wonder the boys and girls—yes, and women, and a few men too—crowded round the door of Figgins' shop (closed for the occasion), and became so demonstrative in their expressions of admiration, as a newly-made bride stepped out of a coach, followed by a newly-made bridegroom, and these again succeeded by other arrivals, the ladies all in white, and the gentlemen with white favours. No wonder the two younger Figginses laughed so heartily, and clapped their hands with such glee, and, as they

examined the bride's white satin shoes, wondered, if she stayed late, whether, like Cinderella, she too would lose her slipper. Nor that Mr. Figgins, in an exuberance of spirits, so frequently forgot himself and his paternal dignity, until, as frequently remonstrated with by his less demonstrative but not less delighted wife, he was momentarily recalled to himself, especially on his pulling her on to his knee and bestowing a smacking kiss that drew forth a general approval, and an attempt to follow suite by the whole nuptial party. The old cat, too, Tom, after having resented one or two treads on his tail or toes, whereby he was always the cause of a temporary hiatus in the hilarity of the hour, by inciting a faint scream from the young lady offenders, in response to a louder one from himself, approached Mr. Figgins and stood on his hind legs at the old gentleman's knee, as though to dispute Mrs. Figgins' right to appropriate his seat.

But wherefore all this, and why was it, we wonder? Why, simply because Miss Mary Jones had—as recorders of such fashionable events have it—that morning been led to the hymeneal altar by Jake Figgins, Esq., junior partner in the highly respectable firm of Figgins and Son, of Wapping High Street. And so the day sped on without a solitary reminder from Figgins, senior, or any one else, of any other days being in store for the happy couple, save—and we had nearly forgotten—an allusion to the memorable Mrs. Bodkins, but which, being opposed by Skeggs' good little wife, he was compelled to cut short, by an application of the moral to Mrs. Figgins, junior, to whom it was to be a warning, 'never to buy a harticle unbeknowing to Jake.'

And what of Grumbleby all this time? It continued to flourish until the inimitable author of *Nicholas Nickleby* opened his battery, and sent such a shower of grape and canister through the Yorkshire boarding-schools, that, with its rival institutions, Grumbleby surrendered, succumbed, and restored its quota of the extradited to disconsolate friends, leaving the old Hall a memorial of the truthfulness of this tale.

In his more contemplative moods, whilst recalling some of the earlier events of his life, poor Grumphy would come before Mr. Skeggs, and compel a sigh that would draw forth the demand of his little wife to know what he was thinking of, when he would express his wonder and regret that Grumphy died without revealing his undoubted patrician descent, especially as it might have been of some advantage to Mrs. Harfagr, whose husband, too, it would occur to him, oddly enough, was also born under a

cloud. Of course such reminiscences did not end there, but were usually pursued until they called up the memory of the only one for whom his friend ever seemed to entertain any real regard; and, with a deeper sigh at the lad's early fate, he would exclaim, 'Poor little Willie Wilton! I wonder *whose boy* he was!'

THE END

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE